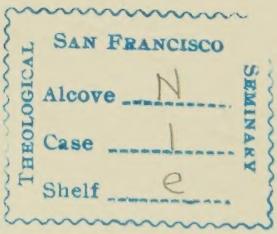
RUBBLE AND ROSELEAVES

F. W. BOREHAM

XB57
B64



C0-EHQ-123

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/rubbleroseleaves0000unse

OTHER BOOKS BY MR. BOREHAM

A BUNCH OF EVERLASTINGS
A HANDFUL OF STARS
A REEL OF RAINBOW
FACES IN THE FIRE
MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST
MUSHROOMS ON THE MOOR
THE GOLDEN MILESTONE
THE HOME OF THE ECHOES
THE LUGGAGE OF LIFE
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL
THE SILVER SHADOW
THE UTTERMOST STAR
SHADOWS ON THE WALL

RUBBLE AND ROSELEAVES

And Things of That Kind

BY
F. W. BOREHAM

San Francisco
Theological Seminary
Alcove N
Case 1
Shelf e

THE ABINGDON PRESS
NEW YORK CINCINNATI

23-17210
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION LIBRARY
San Francisco Theological Seminary Branch
2 Kensington Road, San Anselmo, CA 94960

PR
6003
O6
K83
1923

Copyright, 1923, by
F. W. BOREHAM

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Part I

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Old Envelopes	11
II.	'Whistling Jigs to Milestones'	22
III.	The Front-Door Bell	35
IV.	The Green Chair	46
V.	Living Dogs and Dead Lions	57
VI.	New Brooms	67
VII.	A Good Wife and a Gallant Ship	78

Part II

I.	Odd Volumes	91
II.	O'er Crag and Torrent	101
III.	The Pretender	113
IV.	Achmed's Investment	124
V.	Saturday	134
VI.	The Chimes	145
VII.	'Be Shod with Sandals'	156

Part III

I.	We are Seven	169
II.	The Fish-Pens	181
III.	Edged Tools	192
IV.	Old Photographs	202
V.	A Box of Blocks	214
VI.	Piecrust	226
VII.	All's Well That Ends Well	235

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

EVERY man has a genius for something or other. I have a genius for a comfortable armchair and a blazing fire. Add to these two ingredients what Bob Cratchit would call a *circle* of congenial companions (meaning, as his considerate creator points out, a *semi-circle*) and I am as destitute of envy as the Miller of the Dee. I stipulate, however, that my companions shall be so very much to my taste that, when in the mood, I can talk to my heart's content without seeming garrulous, and, when in the mood, can remain as silent as the Sphinx without appearing sullen.

This outrageous spasm of autobiography is necessitated as an explanation of *Rubble and Roseleaves*. The contents are neither essays nor sermons nor anything of the kind. The inexhaustible patience of my readers has lured me into the habit of talking on any mortal—or immortal—subject that takes my fancy. I have merely set down here a few wayward notions that have, in the course of my wanderings, occurred to me. But, in self-defense, let me add that these outbursts have been punctuated by whole infinitudes of silence. The silences are eloquently represented by the gaps between the chapters.

FRANK W. BOREHAM.

ARMADALE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.
Easter, 1923.

PART I

I

OLD ENVELOPES

THREE envelopes, cruelly torn and sadly crumpled, look reproachfully up at me from the yawning abyss of my waste-paper basket. There is a heavy, pompous envelope, of foolscap size, who evidently feels that I have affronted his dignity by casting him to the void in this unceremonious way. There is a thin, blue envelope who seems to be barking out something about an account that ought to be paid. And there is a dainty little square envelope, delicately perfumed, and addressed in a lady's flowing hand. This pretty piece of stationery keeps asking, in a plaintive voice, if the age of chivalry is dead.

'Why,' these envelopes want to know, *'why are the letters that we brought laid so respectfully on your desk whilst we, to whom you are so much indebted, are crushed and mangled and tossed disdainfully aside? Isn't an envelope as good as a letter any day?'*

There is justice in their contention, and I take up my pen that I may tender them an apology. A letter will tell you much; but the envelope will often tell you more. I remember sitting with John Broadbanks one autumn afternoon on the broad

verandah of the Mosgiel Manse. Some important meetings were to be held next day, and he had driven over to help me in my preparations for them. He had, moreover, arranged to stay the night. As we made our way through the various papers that would have to be dealt with next day, the gate swung open and the postman placed a budget of letters in my hand.

'Hullo!' I exclaimed, 'an English mail!' And, excusing myself from the business on hand, I lost myself in the letters from Home.

I noticed that, when we returned to the agenda paper and reports, John did not seem as keen as usual. He went through the documents mechanically, languidly, perfunctorily, allowing several matters to pass that, ordinarily, he would have questioned. He gave me the impression of having something on his mind, and it was not until we all sat round the tea-table that I grasped the situation. Then he opened his heart to us.

'I am very sorry,' he said, 'but if you'll let me, I think I had better return to Silverstream this evening after all. The arrival of the English mail makes all the difference. You have your letters; mine are waiting for me at the Manse. When I last heard from Home, my mother was very ill; I have spent an anxious month waiting for the letter that has evidently arrived to-day; and I do not feel that I can settle down to to-morrow's business until I have seen it.'

The announcement was greeted with demonstrations of general disappointment. John was a universal favorite; he was the nearest approach to a relative that the children had ever known; and the prospect of having him in the house until bedtime, and of finding him still on the premises when they awoke in the morning, had occasioned the wildest excitement. And now the beautiful dream was about to be shattered!

'I tell you what, John,' I said, going to the window and looking out, 'it's going to be a perfect moonlight night. Spend an hour with the children after tea, and then I'll drive over to Silverstream with you. If all's well, we can return together. If not, we shall understand.'

When, after a sharp cold drive in the moonlight, we reached the Silverstream Manse, things took an unexpected turn.

'Mrs. Broadbanks has gone out,' the maid explained. 'The English mail arrived this afternoon and she said you would be anxious to get your Home letter. She took it with her and said that she would try to get it posted this evening so that you would get it first thing in the morning. And I think she intended to look in at Mrs. Blackie's before she returned and inquire about Alec's broken leg. I know she took some jellies with her.'

It was now John's turn to be disappointed. He had had his journey for nothing; indeed, as things now stood he would be nearer to the letter at Mos-

giel than at Silverstream. Then an idea occurred to him.

'Did Mrs. Broadbanks get letters from *her* home?' The maid thought that she did. She knew, at least, that, after the arrival of the mail, her mistress had spent some time in the bedroom by herself. John hurried to the bedroom.

'Hurrah!' he cried, a moment later. 'Here's the envelope! It is addressed in my mother's handwriting, and the postmark shows that it left England on March 16. The last letter left on February 17 and the envelope was addressed by my sister. So all's serene! Let's get back to Mosgiel!' John wrote a hurried note for Lilian; left it on the bed; and, in a few minutes, we were once more startling the rabbits on the road.

It is wonderful how often the envelope tells us all that we wish to know. I always feel sorry for the Postmaster-General. No man on the planet is under so great an illusion as is he. I can never read his annual report without amusement. It is a stirring romance; but the romance is, to some extent, the romance of *fiction* rather than the romance of *fact*. I know that it is a thankless task to rob a man of an illusion that makes him happy; but the interests of truth sometimes demand it. They do in this case. For it is not the Postmaster-General alone who has been tricked by the witchery of appearances; the fallacy is shared by all the members of his enormous staff. Every individual in

the department, from the Minister down to the messenger-boy, is equally deceived. The annual report proves it. For, in this annual report, the Postmaster-General tells you how many millions of letters he and his subordinates have handled during the year. But have they? As a matter of fact, they have handled no letters at all—except dead letters, and dead things don't count. The Postmaster-General handles envelopes; that is all. Let him correct the statement in his next report.

It will involve him in no loss of prestige, for, as these three envelopes in the basket plead so plaintively, and as John Broadbanks discovered that moonlight night at Silverstream, envelopes have a significance of their own. The postman knows that. He never sees the *letters;* but the *envelopes* whisper to him a thousand secrets. He knows the envelopes that contain circulars, and he hands them to you with a look that is a kind of apology for having troubled you to answer the door. He knows the official envelopes that contain demands for rates, income taxes, and the like. If you are in his good books, he hands them to you sympathetically; if not, he secretly enjoys the fun. Here is an envelope marked 'Urgent'; here is one with a deep black border; here is one with silver edges! He cannot be quite deaf to all that these envelopes say. And here is one, addressed very neatly, to a young lady at the house at the corner. He brings an exactly similar envelope to the same fair recipient every

other morning. On the morning on which he brings the envelope, she invariably scampers along the hall in order personally to receive the letters; on the alternate mornings her father or her sister usually respond to his ring. He never sees her letters; but he knows, he knows! The envelopes chatter to him all the way down the street. Envelopes are great gossips. They talk to the sorter; they talk to the collector; they talk to the postman; they talk to the receiver; and they even go on talking—like the trio that set me scribbling—after they have been tossed disdainfully into the waste-paper basket.

The letter may be interesting in its way; but the envelope reveals the essential things. When a man writes to me, he does not tell me what kind of a man he is; but, recognizing that it is of the utmost importance to me that this information should be placed at my disposal, he is good enough to impart it on the envelope. He smothers the envelope with hierogylphs and signs which are more revealing than a photograph. It frequently happens that my reply is determined more by these signs than by anything that he says in the letter. The letter is probably stiff, formal, lifeless—like a tailor's model. But the envelope reveals individuality, character, life! The envelope's the thing! You find all sorts of things in envelopes; you never find any mock modesty there. Envelopes are never shy; they never stand on ceremony; they wait for no introduction; they begin to talk as soon as they arrive. The

envelope tells me, by means of its postmark, of the locality from which it has come and of the length of time that it has spent upon the road. Then, swiftly establishing itself on friendly terms, it becomes personal, communicative, confidential. It tells me that the writer of the letter that I am about to read is a tidy man or a slovenly man, as the case may be. Sometimes an envelope will tell me that it was addressed by a feverish, impulsive, excitable man; another will assure me, proudly, that it was sent to me by a leisurely, composed, methodical man. 'I come,' boasts one envelope, 'from a painstaking and accurate man who is scrupulously careful to cross every *"t"* and dot every *"i."*' 'And I,' murmurs the envelope lying against it, 'come from a man who doesn't care a rap whether the *"i"s"* have dots, or, for that matter, whether the dots have *"i"s"!*' Here is an envelope that tells me that it has been sent to me by a very dilatory man! The letter is dated March 2; the postmark is dated March 6; he was four days in posting it! This envelope contains a letter earnestly requesting me to oblige the writer by speaking at a meeting which he is organizing, and he is kind enough to speak of the great value which he attaches to my services. But the good man has not the heart to deceive me. So, lest I should take the contents of the letter seriously, he tells me that he has not even troubled to find out how I spell my name or what initials I am pleased to bear. I recognize, of course, that the

information imparted by the envelope is not to be implicitly trusted. A notorious gossip must always be heard with the greatest caution. But most people with much experience of correspondence, before answering a letter, like to hear what the envelope has to say about it.

Nature, I notice, is very careful about the envelopes in which she sends us her letters. The architecture of an orange is a marvel of symmetry and compactness; but who has not admired the color and formation of the peel? Is there anything on earth more delicate and ingenious than the wrappings of a maize-cob? The husks and rinds and pods and shells that we toss upon the rubbish-heap are masterpieces of design and execution. As a small boy, I found among my treasures three things that filled me with ceaseless wonder and admiration —the skin of horse-chestnuts, the cocoons of my silkworms and the shells of the birds' eggs that I brought home from the lane. I knew little about Nature in those days; but I instinctively based my first impressions on the envelopes that she sent; and, judging her by that sure standard, I felt that she must be wonderfully wise and good and beautiful.

It is considered correct, I understand, to say that one should not judge by outward appearances; but how can you help it? Envelopes will talk! I can never forget a tremendous impression made upon my mind a few weeks after I went to live in London. I was barely seventeen. I was feeling

horribly lonely, and, on all sorts of subjects, I was desperately groping my way. One wet night, in passing down the Strand, I saw hundreds of people crowding into Exeter Hall. Moved by a sudden impulse, I followed. The adventure promised a new experience, and I was specializing in novelties. Then came the impression! It was not created by the arguments of the speakers, for, as yet, not one of them had spoken. It was created by their personal appearance. The chair was occupied by Sir Stevenson Arthur Blackwood—'Beauty Blackwood,' as he was called—and addresses were delivered by the Revs. Newman Hall, Donald Fraser, Marcus Rainsford and Archibald G. Brown. I could imagine nothing more picturesque than those five knightly figures—tall, dignified and stately. The spectacle completely captivated me. I gazed spellbound. While the great audience sang the opening hymn, my eyes roved from one handsome form to another, bestowing upon each the silent homage of boyish hero-worship. This happened more than thirty years ago; yet I am confident that I could easily write out a full and accurate report of each of the speeches delivered that night. So favorably had the envelopes impressed my mind! And so effectively had they prepared me for the letters they contained!

In every department of life it is the envelope that becomes emphatic. In describing at night the people with whom we have met during the day, we refer to 'the lady in the fur coat,' 'the girl in the red

hat,' and 'the man in the grey suit.' The lady, the girl and the man—these are letters. The fur coat, the red hat and the grey suit are merely envelopes. Yet we feel that to speak of 'a lady,' 'a girl' or 'a man' is, in effect, to say nothing. It conveys no concrete idea. It lacks vividness, force, reality. But 'a lady *in a fur coat,*' 'a girl *in a red hat,*' 'a man *in a grey suit*'—these are pictures! The envelope makes all the difference.

We often say by way of the envelope what we cannot say so well in the body of the letter. Charles Dickens knew that; so did John Bunyan; so did the Greatest Master of all.

Dickens knew it. Indeed, somebody has as good as said that Dickens is all envelopes; he gives us the barrister's wig in mistake for the barrister, the beadle's cocked hat in mistake for the beadle, and so on. But if it is true, on the one hand, that Dickens is too fond of envelopes, it must be confessed, on the other, that he knows how to use them. Who can forget the night when David Copperfield and Mr. Peggotty set out together on one of those dreadful journeys that stood connected with the loss of little Emily? Before starting, Mr. Peggotty entered Emily's room. 'Without appearing to notice what he was doing,' said David Copperfield, 'I saw how carefully he adjusted the little room and finally took out of a drawer one of her dresses, neatly folded, and placed it on a chair. He made no allusion to these clothes, neither did I. There they

had been waiting for her, many and many a night, no doubt.' Mr. Peggotty could not express in so many words all that he felt; but Emily, if she came, would see the dress lying ready for her, and would understand that everything was to be just as it always was. She would see the envelope; and the envelope would say more than any letter could possibly do.

Bunyan knew it. The first thing that impressed the people of Vanity Fair, as they gazed upon Christian and Faithful, was that 'the pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair.'

And Jesus knew it. The most searching and terrible of all His parables was the parable of the man who, seated at the king's feast, had not a wedding garment. And, even more notably, when the prodigal came home, the father knew of *no words* in which he could adequately welcome his son. But, if he could not write a satisfactory letter, he could at least express himself by means of the envelope! Away with the rags! On with the robes! Bring forth *the best robe* and put it on him, and put *a ring* on his hand and *shoes* on his feet!

And even when the Bible attempts to depict the felicities of the world to come, it does it, not in the phraseology that we employ in letters, but in the symbolism that we employ in the use of envelopes. It speaks of robes and palms and crowns, for it knows that the wise will understand.

II

'WHISTLING JIGS TO MILESTONES'

I

Blueberry Creek! Blueberry Creek! Where in the world was Blueberry Creek? It was all very well for Conference to resolve—in the easy and airy fashion that is so charmingly characteristic of Conferences—that John Broadbanks and I should be appointed *'to visit and report upon the affairs of the congregation at Blueberry Creek';* but how on earth were we to get there? On that point, the Conference, in its wisdom, had given no directions: it had not even condescended to take so mundane a detail into its consideration. A fearful and wonderful thing is a Conference. A Conference is capable of ordering an inquiry into the state of the inhabitants of Mars; and it would appoint its commissioners without giving a thought to the ways and means by which they were to proceed to the scene of their investigations. It was altogether beneath the dignity of that august body to reflect that Blueberry Creek is as near to the Other End of Nowhere as any man need wish to go; that it is many miles from a railway station or a decent road; and that the only approach to it is by means of a grassy track that, winding in and out among the

great brown hills, is, during a large part of the year, impassable. The only indication of the track's existence consisted of a suspicion of wheelmarks among the tussock.

When, at the close of the session, we met on the steps outside the hall, John and I stared at each other in a lugubrious bewilderment. Then, seeing, as he never failed to do, the humor of the situation, he burst into peals of laughter.

'Blueberry Creek!' he roared, as though the very name were a joke,' and how are we to get to Blueberry Creek?'

Still, while we admired the complacent audacity with which the Conference had saddled us with the responsibility of finding—or making—a road to Blueberry Creek, *we* felt, as *it* felt, that somebody ought to go. Allan Gillespie, a young minister, who, for seven years, had done excellent work there, had resigned without any apparent reason. The people, whose confidence, esteem and affection he had completely won, were depressed and disheartened; and the work stood in imminent peril. John used to say that, if you leave a problem long enough, it will solve itself. The way in which the problem of getting to Blueberry Creek solved itself certainly seemed to vindicate his philosophy.

'I've been making inquiries,' said Mr. Alexander Mitchell, a man of few words but of great practical sagacity, as he met me in the porch on the last day of the Conference. 'I've been making inquiries

about that appointment of yours. I find that a motor has been through to Blueberry. If *one* can do it, *another* can. I have a sturdy little car that will get there if it is possible for four wheels to do it. My business will take me as far as Crannington next week, so that I shall then be two-thirds of the way to Blueberry. If you and Mr. Broadbanks care to accompany me, we will do our best to get through. I expect we shall have a rough passage, but I am willing to take all the risks if you are.'

Truth to tell, the project was very much to our taste. In order that we might make an early start on the Tuesday, we arranged that John should spend Monday night as our guest at Mosgiel. He came, and we both awoke next morning on the best of terms with ourselves. Civilization was quickly left behind. We followed the road as far as Crannington; had lunch there; and then plunged into the hills. For the next few hours Mr. Mitchell's motor —whose sturdiness he had by no means exaggerated—was crashing its way through scrub and fern; clambering over rocky boulders; gliding down precipitous gradients; edging its course along shelves cut in the hillside; and splashing through the stream whose tortuous folds awaited us in every hollow. At about five o'clock we emerged upon a great plain covered with tussock; we made out a cluster of cottages in the distance; and we knew that, at last, we had come to Blueberry Creek.

'Why, here is Allan!' exclaimed John, as he

pointed to a solitary horseman who, dashing along a track that intersected ours, was evidently hurrying to join us.

We were soon at the manse. Allan was not married; his mother kept house for him. 'My father died of consumption,' he used to say, 'and so did my grandfather: I must make sure that I am a *citizen* of this planet, and not merely a *visitor,* before I let any pretty girl make eyes at me!'

Our mission was quite unavailing. John and I had a long talk with Allan after tea.

'No,' he said at last, rising from his chair and pacing the room under the stress of strong emotion. His shock of fair wavy hair fell about his forehead when he was excited, and he brushed it back impatiently with his hand. His pale blue eyes burned at such times as though a fire were blazing behind them. 'No; I feel that I am *whistling jigs to milestones!* I am preaching to people, who, while they are very good to me, make no response of any kind to my message. They see to it that Mother and I want for nothing; they bring us all kinds of little dainties from the farms and stations; they share with us whatever's going as the seasons come around; and they welcome me into their homes as though I really belonged to them. They are great church people, too; they attend the services magnificently, although they have to come long distances along bad roads in all sorts of weather. They even compliment me on my sermons, just as a sleeper,

roused at midnight by the alarm of fire, might, without rising, praise the dramatic ability of the friend who had awakened him. I've stood it as long as I can,' he cried, his lip quivering and his face pale with passion, 'and now I must give it up. You needn't try to find me another church; I have no wish to repeat the experience. I shall preach my last sermon on Sunday week, and I have chosen my theme. I shall preach,' he said, coming right up to us and transfixing us with eyes whose glowing fervor seemed to scorch us, 'I shall preach on the *Unpardonable Sin!* I shall preach as gently and as persuasively, but as powerfully, as I know how. But *that* will be my subject. For the Unpardonable Sin is to tamper with your oracle, to be disloyal to your vision, to play fast and loose with the truth!'

Allan had an appointment that evening. Mr. Mitchell, exhausted by his long drive, retired early. John and I excused ourselves and set off for a walk across the plain. For a while we journeyed in silence, enjoying the sunset, the song of the birds and the evening air. Allan's words, too, had taken a strong hold upon us.

'There's a lot in what he says,' John remarked at length, 'especially in his exposition of the Unpardonable Sin. Strangely enough, I was looking into the subject only a few days ago. The popular interpretation is, of course, absurd upon the face of it. You remember George Borrow's story of Peter Williams. Peter, as a boy of seven, came upon the

passage 'about the Unpardonable Sin and took it into his head that he could dispose of religion for the rest of his life by the simple process of committing that deadly transgression. Arising from his bed one night, he went out into the open air, had a good look at the stars, and then, stretching himself upon the ground and supporting his face with his hands, the little idiot poured out such a hideous torrent of blasphemy as, he believed, would destroy his soul for ever. For years the memory of that solemn act of spiritual self-destruction darkened all his days and haunted all his nights. He tormented himself, as Bunyan did, with the conviction that he had committed the sin for which there is no forgiveness. It ended as it did with Bunyan, and as it always does. Chrysostom says that it is notorious that men who imagine that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost invariably become Christians and lead exemplary lives.'

We came at that moment to the banks of the creek; the waters were sparkling in the moonlight; we instinctively seated ourselves among the ferns.

'Allan's interpretation,' John went on, 'is much nearer the mark. The words were addressed in the first instance to men who declared that Christ cast out devils by the prince of the devils. The thing is ridiculous; it is a contradiction in terms. Why should the prince of the devils occupy himself with casting out devils? The men who said such a thing were simply talking for the sake of talking. They

were putting no brain into it. They were stultifying reason; and the man who stultifies his reason is darkening his own windows. He is, as Allan put it, tampering with his oracle; he is playing fast and loose with the truth. A fellow may behave in the same way towards his conscience or towards any other means of moral or spiritual illumination. As soon as he does that kind of thing, he shuts the door in his own face; he puts himself beyond the possibility of salvation. And, when I was dipping into the matter at Silverstream a few nights since, I came to the conclusion that the passage about the Unpardonable Sin simply means this: the men who, in the old Galilean days, distorted the evidence of the miracles and rejected the testimony of the Son of Man, were guilty of a serious offence; but it was a venial offence: for, after all, it was not easy to realize that a Nazarene peasant was the Son of God. But those to whom the fullness of the Gospel has come, and upon whom the light of the ages has shone, how shall they be made the recipients of the divine grace if they deliberately block every channel by which that grace may approach them? If they stultify their reasons and harden their hearts; if, as Allan says, they tamper with their oracles and play fast and loose with the truth, what hope is there for them? I am sorry to see poor old Allan taking the apathy of his congregation so much to heart: but most of us would make better ministers if we took it to heart a little more.'

We discussed the matter for an hour or so, our conversation punctuated by the splashing of the trout in the creek; and then, feeling that it was getting chilly, we rose and walked back to the manse. Allan, to our surprise, was already there.

'Now, look,' he said, as he seated himself in his armchair, and began to poke the fire, 'you two men have come up here to talk me out of my decision; and I'm delighted to see you. But tell me this. A few years ago nobody could talk about the things of which I speak every Sunday without moving people to deep emotion. I have been reading the records of Wesley and Whitefield and Spurgeon. Why, bless me, it was nothing for those men to see a whole audience bathed in tears. Whitefield would have the Kingswood miners crying like babies. Why do I never see any evidence of deep feeling? that's what I want to know. You may say that it's because I don't preach as Wesley and Whitefield and Spurgeon preached. I thought until lately that *that* was the explanation. But I've given up that theory: it won't work. Livingstone has a story about old Baba, a native chief, who bore the most excruciating torture without the flicker of an eyelid or the contraction of a muscle. Yet, when Livingstone read to him the story of the crucifixion, he was melted to tears. No flights of rhetoric, mark you! Just the reading of the New Testament, without note or comment! Now I've read that same story to my people; and who was much affected by it?

Then look at Spurgeon! Why, Spurgeon, anxious to test the acoustic properties of his new Tabernacle, entered the pulpit, believing the building to be empty, and exclaimed, *'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!'* A workman, concealed among the empty pews, heard the words, listened, heard them repeated, and was profoundly stirred by them. He laid down his tools, sought an interview with Spurgeon, and was led into a life of useful and happy service. No sermon, mark you; just a text! Why, *I've* quoted that same text scores of times, and who came to *me* enquiring the way of salvation? I shall say all this in my farewell sermon. I shall say it as kindly as I can, for the people have been wonderfully good to me; but it is my duty to say it. And I'm going to recite a few verses of poetry. Would you like to hear them? I haven't memorized them yet. I only came upon them yesterday.'

He slipped off to another room and returned with a volume of poems by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. Opening it, he read to us some verses entitled *The Two Sunsets*. They tell how a young fellow, of pure heart and simple ways, saw a sunset and heard a song. As the sinking sun filled the western sky with crimson and gold—

> He looked, and as he looked, the sight,
> Sent from his soul through breast and brain
> Such intense joy, it hurt like pain.
> His heart seemed bursting with delight.

So near the unknown seemed, so close
He might have grasped it with his hand.
He felt his inmost soul expand,
As sunlight will expand a rose.

And after the story of the sunset we have the story of the song:

One day he heard a singing strain—
A human voice, in bird-like trills,
He paused, and little rapture-rills
Went trickling downward through each vein.

And then the years went by. Queen Folly held her sway. She fed his flesh and drugged his mind; he trailed his glory in the mire. And, after a long interval, he revisited his boyhood's home, beheld another sunset and heard another song:

The clouds made day a gorgeous bed;
He saw the splendor of the sky
With *unmoved heart* and *stolid eye;*
He only knew the West was red.

Then, suddenly, a fresh young voice
Rose, bird-like, from some hidden place;
He did not even turn his face,
It struck him simply as a noise!

He saw the sunset that once filled him with ecstasy; but he saw it *'with unmoved heart and stolid eye'!* He heard the song that once sounded to him like the voice of angels, and *'it struck him simply as a noise!'*

'That's the Unpardonable Sin!' exclaimed Allan,

gathering fervor as he proceeded. He sprang from his chair and stood facing us, his back to the fire. *'That's* the Unpardonable Sin! Miss Wilcox as good as says so. Listen!

> O! worst of punishments, that brings
> A blunting of all finer sense,
> A loss of feelings keen, intense,
> And dulls us to the higher things.
>
> O! shape more hideous and more dread,
> Than Vengeance takes in Creed-taught minds,
> This certain doom that blunts and blinds,
> And strikes the holiest feelings dead!

This vehement recital brought on a violent fit of coughing and he left the room. When he returned we made no attempt to reply to him. We felt that the case did not lend itself to argument. We fondly wished that we could have retained him for the ministry. His burning passion would have glorified any pulpit. But what could we say?

We were astir early next morning. Mr. Mitchell was up soon after dawn getting the car ready for the road. After breakfast, John led us all in family worship. Very graciously and very feelingly he committed the young minister to the divine guidance and care. He specially pleaded that the closing days of his ministry might be a season in which rich fruit should be gathered and lasting impressions made. 'And,' he continued, 'may the tears that he sheds as he takes farewell of his people soften his heart towards them and wash from his eyes the

vision of their indifference. And may he be astonished in the Great Day at the abundant response which their hearts have made to the Word that he has preached among them.' Half an hour later we were again speeding towards the hills, Allan and his mother waving to us from the gate.

III

Allan was as good as his word; after leaving Blueberry he never preached again. 'I must have a rest for a month or two,' he said. 'I saved a little money at Blueberry, and I can afford to take life easily for a while and think things over. The next that I heard of him was in a letter, which some years later I received from John Broadbanks. 'Poor old Allan Gillespie has gone,' he told me. 'His lungs went all to pieces after he left Blueberry; the tonic air of the hills kept him alive up there. He went to the Mount Stewart Sanatorium; but it was too late. He died there three weeks later. I always felt that his fervent spirit made too heavy a demand upon so frail a frame. His mother was much touched by the letters she received from Blueberry. Crowds of young people wrote to say that they could never forget the things that, in public and in private, Allan had said to them; they owed everything, some of them added, to his intense devoted ministry. It looks as if they were not so irresponsive as they seemed.'

I suspect that this is usually so. People are not so adamantine as they like to look. Still, John and I will always feel that Allan taught us to take our work a little more seriously. Whenever we are tempted to lower our ideals, or to settle down complacently to things as they are, his great eyes—so full of solicitude and passion—seem to pierce our very souls and sting us to concern.

III

THE FRONT-DOOR BELL

A FEARFUL and wonderful contrivance is a front-door bell. The wire attached to my front-door bell is the line of communication between me and the universe. The universe knows it—and so do I. The front-door bell is the one thing about a private dwelling that is public property. If a stranger walked in at the front gate and began to push or pull at anything else, I should instantly send for the police; but if, with all the confidence of proprietorship, he walks straight to the front-door bell, and begins to push or pull at *it,* I regard the position as perfectly normal. No man living may enter my gate in order to inspect the roses, to admire the view or to stroke the cat. But any one has a perfect right to walk boldly up the path and ring the front-door bell. A man may do what he will with his own; and the bell is *his.* It is more his than mine. It is perfectly true that I ordered the bell to be put there, and that I paid for it; but it is also true that I am the only person on the planet to whom it is of no use at all. A visitor from Mars, seeing the bellhangers working to my order, might be pardoned for supposing that I was gratifying in this way my insatiable passion for music. Not at all.

In giving the order for the bell, I was actuated by no selfish motive. The bell at my front door is not my bell. It is everybody's bell—everybody's, that is to say, but mine.

That is why such a thrill runs through the house when the bell rings. It is one of the sensations of the commonplace. A ring at the front-door bell is a bolt from the blue, a call from the vast, a message from out of the infinite. It presents to the imagination such a boundless range of possibilities. There are fifteen hundred million people on the planet, and this may be any one of them. It may be a hawker with the inevitable cake of soap—a cake of soap that he, poor man, appears to need so much more than I do. It may be the telegraph-boy with some startlingly pleasant or poignantly painful message. It may be the very man I want to see or the very man I don't. Or, then again, it may be 'only Sam.' Everybody knows the accents of ineffable disdain in which it is announced that the ringer of the bell is simply a member of the family circle. It may be anybody; that is the point. When the front-door bell rings, you are prepared for anything. You feel, as you await the announcement, that you have suddenly dipped your hand into the lucky-bag of the universe, and you are in a flutter of curiosity as to what you are about to draw. Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor; rich man, poor man, begger man, thief; why is the girl so long in returning from the door? Smiles, frowns, laugh-

ter, tears; they may any of them come with the ringing of the front-door bell. When the bell rings, you are eating your dinner, or reading the paper, or romping with the children, or chatting easily beside the fire. The atmosphere is perfectly tranquil; all the wheels are running smoothly; life is without a thrill. The bell rings; all eyes are lifted; each member of the household glances inquiringly at all the others; is anybody expecting anybody? We vaguely feel, when the bell rings, that life is about to enter upon a fresh phase. Whether the change will be for weal or for woe, for better or for worse, we cannot tell. We only know that things are not likely to be quite the same again. Somebody will come in, or somebody will be called out, or something fresh will have to be done. The cards of life are all shuffled and dealt afresh at the ringing of the front-door bell.

But it was not of my own bell that I set out to write. My own bell is not my own bell; why, then, should I write of it? I prefer to write of the bells that *do* belong to me. The next-door bell is my bell; and the bell of the house beyond that; and so on to the end of space. For, if it is humiliating to reflect that the bell at my own door is not mine, it is extremely gratifying to be reminded that, beyond my door, there are millions and millions of bells that I can proudly call my own. I am not generally considered musical; but I spend a good deal of my time in bell-ringing. And I propose to

describe one or two instruments on which, at some time or other, I have performed.

I

To begin with, there is *the bell that is not working*. To all outward appearance, the mechanism may be complete. You press the neat little button and then airily turn your back upon it, happy in the conviction that you have sent a delicious flutter through every soul on the premises. In point of fact you have done nothing of the kind. Things within are going on just as they were when you opened the gate; nobody has the slightest suspicion that you are cooling your heels on the doormat. The electric battery is exhausted. Beyond a scarcely perceptible click when your fingers pressed the button, you made no noise at all. That is the worst of life's most tragic collapses. There is nothing to indicate the break-down. The failure does not advertise itself. 'Samson said, I will go out as at other times and shake myself; and *he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.*' The button and the bell were there; how was he to know that the current had vanished? The preacher enters his pulpit as of old; who could have suspected that the invisible force, without which everything is so pitifully ineffective, had forsaken him. The worker is still in his place; who would have dreamed that, having lost his old power, his influence now counts for so little? Lots of people fancy that a button

and a bell complete the requisites of life. Because the external appliances are in good order, they take it for granted that everything is working satisfactorily. It is a woeful blunder. The button may be there; and the bell may be there; yet the entire outfit may be destitute of all practical utility. I called at a house last week. Outside there was a button and inside there was a bell. I pressed the button several times and only discovered afterwards that the mechanism to which it was attached gave the lady of the house no intimation of my presence at her door. The bell was not working.

A bell that is out of action represents a broken line of communication between the individual and the universe. Some time ago my bell broke down. I heard every day of people who had called and gone away, fancying that nobody was at home. I wondered every night what I had missed during the day through being out of touch with the world. The broken bell had turned me into a hermit, an exile, a recluse. People might want me never so badly; they could not get at me. I might want them never so badly; they left the door without my seeing them.

The saddest case of this kind that ever came under my notice occurred at Hobart. A gentleman called one day and made it clear that his business was marked by gravity and urgency.

'My name,' he said, 'is McArthur. My mother is lying very ill at the Homeopathic Hospital. It

would be a great comfort to us all, and to her, if you could run up and see her. She has often asked us to send for you; but we have always put it off. It seemed like encouraging her in the notion that her days were few. But now we shall be very glad if you will go. I ought to tell you, though, that my mother is very deaf. You will not be able to make her hear. But you will find a slate and pencil at the bedside. If you write on it whatever you wish to say, she will be able to read it and reply to you.'

I went at once. When I told the matron that I had come to see Mrs. McArthur, a strange look overspread her face and she drew me into her private room.

'Is she dead?' I asked, 'or unconscious?'

'Oh, no,' the matron replied, 'she is alive and quite conscious. But during the last few hours her sight has failed her. She can only see us like shadows between herself and the window. I don't know how you will be able to communicate with her.'

I never felt so helpless in my life. As I stood by her bedside she seemed so near, yet so very far away. I stroked her forehead and she smiled; but that was all. I was standing on the doormat pressing the button; but the bell was not working. I could not establish communication with the soul within. It is a way that bells have. The current becomes exhausted sooner or later. It is clearly

intended that, while we are in touch with the universe, we should learn all that the universe can teach us, so that, when the line of communication collapses, we shall be independent of the universe and need its messages no more.

Then there is *the bell that, when I press the button, rings without my hearing it.* One day last week I called at a house in Winchester Avenue. I pressed the button several times, listening intently. I could hear no sound within. I tapped; but still everything was silent. I was just stooping to slip my card under the door when, suddenly, I heard a rush and a commotion within, and in a moment, Mrs. Finch, full of charming apologies, stood before me. She had heard the bell each time; but her maid was out; she was herself completing her toilet; she was dreadfully ashamed to have kept me waiting.

We are too apt to suppose that our pressure of the button is awakening no response. We fancy that our words fall upon deaf ears. People appear to take no notice. Perhaps, if we knew all, we should discover that while we press, and listen, and hear nothing, we are all unconsciously throwing some gentle spirit into a perfect fever of agitation.

I pressed the button at my neighbor's door;
But, when I heard no sound, I turned and stood
Irresolute. If I had moved a bell
I must have heard it. Should I rap, or go?
But in a moment more my neighbor came.

'The bell is far, and very small,' he said.
'You may not catch it for the walls between
But rest assured, each time you push the knob
We cannot choose but hear the bell inside.'

And what they told me of my neighbor's bell
Has cheered me when I knocked at some hard heart
And caught no answer. Now and then
I poured my soul out in a hot appeal
And had no sign from lip, or hand, or eye,
That he I would have saved had even heard.
And I have sighed and turned away; and then
My neighbor's words came back: 'We cannot choose
But hear inside.'
And after many days
I have had an answer to a word I spoke
In ears that seemed as deaf as dead men's ears.

I was twelve years at Mosgiel in New Zealand. I always felt that the men and women, and especially the old people, were attached to me; but, somehow, I was never as successful with the children as I should like to have been. I was very fond of them; I loved to meet them, play with them, talk with them; but I saw them grow up to be young men and women without being impressed in any way by any word of mine. That was the bitterest ingredient in my sorrow when, fifteen years ago, I left that little country town.

During the past three years I have traveled Australia from end to end. In a railway journey of seven thousand miles I have crossed and recrossed the entire continent. And one of the most delight-

ful experiences of this great trip was to meet my old Mosgiel boys and girls at every turn. One girl came, with her husband, a hundred miles to spend five minutes with me at the railway station; others traveled with me for twenty or thirty miles just for the sake of the talk in the train. Without an exception, they were all well and happy and living useful lives. In every case they reminded me of things that I had said and done in the old days—things that, as I fancied, had made no impression at all. And when I returned to the quiet of my own home, and reviewed all these happy reunions, I felt ashamed of having suspected these young people of being irresponsive. The bell often rings without *our* hearing it.

III

On the other hand, it does occasionally happen that, when I press the button, the bell rings; I myself, standing on the doormat, distinctly hear it; *yet it is not heard by those upon whom I have called.*

'I am so sorry,' exclaimed Mrs. Wilson, as she left the church last evening. 'I took my book on Thursday afternoon and strolled down to the summer-house at the foot of the garden; I must have become absorbed in the story; I did not hear the bell; and, when I came in, I found your card under the door.'

'I say,' cried Harry Blair, 'I am awfully sorry.

I must have been at home when you called. But the bell is at the front of the house, and we happened to be at the back. The children were making such a din that we never heard you.'

Precisely! There are those whose bells we ring in vain. In the days in which I made up my mind to be a minister, I fell under the influence of the Rev. James Douglas, M.A., of Brixton, a most devout and scholarly man. He often took me for a walk on Clapham Common, and said things to me that I have never forgotten.

'When you are a minister,' he said one day, as we sat under the shelter of a giant oak, 'when you are a minister, you will find, wherever you go, that there are a certain number of people whom you are not fitted to influence. It is largely a matter of personality and temperament. Don't break your heart over it. Satisfy your conscience that you have done your duty by them, and then leave it at that!'

It was wise counsel. There are a certain number of bells that, rung by us, are not heard within.

IV

And, last and saddest of all, there is *the bell that we did not ring.* We half thought of it; we heard afterwards how welcome a call would have been; but the contemplated visit was not paid.

> Around the corner I have a friend,
> In the great city that has no end.

Yet days go by and weeks rush on,
And before I know it a year is gone;
And I never see my old friend's face,
For life is a swift and terrible race.
He knows I love him just as well
As in the days when I rang his bell
And he rang mine. We were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men—
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.

'To-morrow,' I say, 'I will call on Jim,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him.'
But to-morrow comes and to-morrow goes,
And the distance between us grows and grows,
Around the corner—yet miles away. . . .
'Here's a telegram, sir.' 'Jim died to-day!'
And that's what we get and deserve in the end—
Around the corner a vanished friend.

I really intended to have pressed the button at Jim's door; but the good intentions did not ring the bell; and I am left to nurse my lifelong remorse.

I really intended to have answered the door when a Visitor Divine stood gently knocking there; but the good intention did not let Him in; He turned sadly and wearily away; and I am left to my shame and my everlasting regret.

IV

THE GREEN CHAIR

I

THE green chair was never occupied. It stood—according to Irving Bacheller—in the home of Michael Hacket; and Michael Hacket is the most lovable schoolmaster in American literature. Michael Hacket possessed a violin and a microscope. The romps that he led with the one, and the researches that he conducted with the other, represented the two sides of his character; for he was the jolliest soul in all that countryside, and the wisest. But, in addition to the violin and the microscope, Michael Hacket possessed a green chair; and the green chair was even more valuable, as a revelation of the schoolmaster's character, than either the microscope or the violin. Barton Baynes, the hero of the story, went as a boarder to Mr. Hacket's school; and the green chair deeply impressed him. When the family assembled at table, the green chair, always empty, was always there. Before he took his own seat, Mr. Hacket put his hand on the back of the green chair and exclaimed:

'A merry heart to you, Michael Henry!'

It was a rollicking meal, that first meal at which Barton was present; the schoolmaster was full of

quips and jests; and his clever sallies kept everybody bubbling with laughter. Then, when all had finished, he rose and took the green chair from the table, exclaiming:

'Michael Henry, God bless you!'

'I wondered at the meaning of this,' says Barton, 'but I dared not ask.' Shortly afterwards, however, he summed up courage to do so. Mr. Hacket had gone out.

'I've been all day in the study,' the schoolmaster had said; 'I must take a walk or I shall get an exalted abdomen. One is badly beaten in the race of life when his abdomen gets ahead of his toes. Children, keep Barton happy till I come back, and mind you, don't forget the good fellow in the green chair!'

He had not been long gone when the children differed as to the game that they should play. A dispute was threatening.

'Don't forget Michael Henry!' said Mrs. Hacket, reprovingly.

'Who *is* Michael Henry?' asked Barton.

'Sure,' replied Mrs. Hacket, 'he's the child that has never been born. He was to be the biggest and noblest of them all—kind and helpful and cheery-hearted and beloved of God above all the others. We try to live up to him.'

'He seemed to me,' said Barton, 'a very strange and wonderful creature—this invisible occupant of the green chair. Michael Henry was the spirit of

their home, an ideal of which the empty chair was a constant reminder.'

When a conversation threatened to become too heated, it was always Michael Henry whose ears must not be offended by harsh and angry tones; it was Michael Henry who had begged that a culprit might be forgiven just this once: it was Michael Henry who was always suggesting little acts of courtesy and kindness.

'I like to think of Michael Henry,' the schoolmaster would say. 'His food is good thoughts and his wine is laughter. I had a long talk with Michael Henry last night when you were all abed. His face was a chunk of merriment. Oh, what a limb he is! I wish I could tell you all the good things he said!'

But he couldn't; and we all know why.

There was no Michael Henry! And yet Michael Henry—the occupant of the green chair—pervaded like a perfume and ruled like a prince the gentle schoolmaster's delightful home!

II

We are very largely ruled by empty chairs. In support of this contention let me call two or three witnesses. The first is Clarence Shadbrook.

Clarence was well on in life when I first met him. He struck me as being reserved, taciturn, unsociable. It took me several years, I grieve to say, to understand him. It was on the occasion of his wife's death that I first caught glimpses of

unsuspected depths of tenderness and sentiment within him. Hannah Shadbrook was one of our most excellent women. She had a kind thought for everybody. She was the heart and soul of our ladies' organizations. In every good cause her hand was promptly outstretched to help. She was especially tactful in her dealings with the young people: to many of the girls she was a second mother. She was tall and spare, with a slight stoop at the shoulders; her eyes were soft and gray; and her face was illumined by a look of wonderful intelligence and sweetness. She was the sort of woman to whom one could tell anything.

Somehow, I had always imagined that, at home, she was unappreciated. I cannot recall anything that I ever heard or saw that can have given me so false and unfortunate an impression. But there it was! And it was, therefore, with a shock of surprise that, at the time of her death, I found the strong and silent man so utterly broken and disconsolate.

'Ah,' he sobbed, when, in a few halting words, I referred to the affection in which his wife was held at the church, 'I dare say. But it was at home that she was at her best. Nobody will ever know what she was to me and to the children who have married and gone.'

But it was not until two years later that he opened his heart more thoroughly. I heard on a certain Sunday evening that he was ill; and next

day I made my way to the cottage. He was in bed. I stepped across to the window and laid my hand upon a chair, intending to transfer it to the bedside.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'but don't take that one. Would you mind having the chair over by the wardrobe instead?'

If the request struck me as strange, the thought only lingered for a moment. I replaced the chair that I was holding; took the one indicated; and dismissed the matter from my mind.

'I dare say you are wondering why I asked you not to take the chair by the window,' he said presently, after we had discussed the weather, the news, and his prospects of a speedy recovery. 'There's a story about that chair that I've never told to anybody, except to her'—glancing at a portrait—'but if you'd like to hear it, I don't mind telling you.'

'Well,' he went on, assured of my interest, 'I took a fancy to that chair nearly fifty years ago. I was learning wood-carving; I thought that it would suit my purpose: and I bought it. It was the first piece of furniture that I ever possessed. I remember laughing to myself as I carried it to my little room. It stood beside the bed there for a year or two. Then I met Hannah. At first I felt a little bit afraid of her. She seemed far too good for me. But then, I thought to myself, she is far too good for anybody. And so our courtship began, and one night I came home tremendously excited. We were

engaged! I lay awake for hours that night, sometimes painting wonderful pictures of the happy days to be, and sometimes lecturing myself as to the kind of man I must become in order to be worthy of the treasure about to be confided to my care. And I comforted myself with the reminder that I should have her always beside me to restrain the worst and encourage the best that was in me. And, thinking such thoughts, I at length fell asleep. But, sleeping, I went on dreaming. I thought that, coming home tired from the shop, I entered my little room at the top of the stairs (the room in which I was actually sleeping) and was surprised to find it occupied. A man was sitting in the chair beside the bed—the chair over there by the window. But I could not be angry, for he looked up and welcomed me with a smile that disarmed my suspicions and made me feel that all was well. I felt instantly and powerfully drawn to him. He seemed to magnetize me. His face realized my ideal of manly strength, tempered by an indefinable charm and courtesy. Then, as I gazed, it occurred to me that there was, about his countenance and bearing, something strangely familiar. What could it mean? Whom could it be? And then the truth flashed upon me. It was *myself!* Yes, it was myself as I should be in the years to come under Hannah's gentle and gracious influence! It was myself transfigured! I awoke and found myself staring fixedly at the empty chair beside the bed—the chair that you were about

to remove from the window there. I made up my mind that day that the chair should never be used. It is dedicated to the ideal self of whom I caught a glimpse in my boyish dream. And, even now, the shadowy visitor of that memorable night seems to be still sitting there; and I never approach the chair without mentally comparing myself with its silent occupant.'

Who would have supposed that, beneath the rugged exterior of Clarence Shadbrook, there dwelt so rich a vein of poetry and romance? I almost apologized to him for my earlier judgment. It only shows that, like the first Australian explorers, we may tread the gold beneath our feet without suspecting its existence.

III

My second witness is Harold Glendinning. Harold was the minister at Port Eyre, a little seaside town close to the harbor's mouth. He had frequently asked me to exchange pulpits with him, and at last he had coaxed me to consent.

'Come early on Saturday,' he wrote, 'so that we may have an hour or two together here before I have to leave.'

Like Clarence Shadbrook, Harold was a widower. But, unlike Clarence, he was still young. His wife had faded and died after three short years of married life. His mother kept house for him at the manse.

I reached Port Eyre early on the Saturday. We went for a walk round the rocky coast before dinner; and in the afternoon Harold made preparations for departure.

'But, dear me,' he exclaimed, 'I haven't shown you your room. Come with me!' And he led me out into the hall and up the stairs.

The room was obviously his own. Photographs of his young wife were everywhere. Her presence pervaded it. The window commanded a noble view of the bay, and we stood for a minute or two admiring the prospect. We then turned towards the door.

'Treat the place as though it belonged to you,' he said. 'Make yourself perfectly at home. You're welcome to everything except—' He half-closed the door again.

'You'll understand, I know,' he went on, 'but don't use the armchair over there in the corner.' I glanced in the direction indicated by his gaze. A comfortable chair stood beside a small occasional table on which a lovely bowl of roses had been placed.

'It's *her* chair,' he explained. 'It used to stand by the fireplace in the dining-room. She sat there every evening, reading or sewing, with her feet resting on her campstool.' I noticed now that a folded campstool stood near the chair. 'Somehow,' he continued, 'the chair seemed to become a part of her. And after—afterwards—I couldn't bear to

leave it there for anybody to occupy who happened to call; so I brought it up here. And, somehow, with the chair there, she doesn't seem so very far away. I'll show you something else,' he said; and, diving into a drawer near his hand, he produced an old magazine.

'I only found this afterwards,' he explained. 'At least I only noticed the marked passage. I saw it in her lap several times during the last week or two, and, in an off-hand way, I picked it up and glanced through it. But it was only after—afterwards—that I noticed that faint pencil-mark beside this poem.' He handed me the magazine, and, surely enough, I detected a mark, so faint as to be scarcely visable, beside some lines by L. C. Jack.

> When day is done and in the golden west
> My soul from yours sinks slowly out of sight,
> And you alone enjoy the warmth and light
> That once had seemed of all God's gifts the best;
> When roses bloom and I not there to name,
> When thrushes sing and I not there to hear,
> When rippling laughter breaks upon your ear
> And friends come flocking as of old they came;
> I pray, dear heart, for sweet Remembrance sake
> You pluck the rose and hear the songful thrush.
> With laughter meet once more the merry jest
> And great familiar faces still awake,
> For I, asleep in the eternal Hush,
> Would have you ever at your golden best.

'You may think it strange,' he concluded, as we turned to leave the room, 'but I often fancy that the

chair in the corner makes it a little more easy for me to live in the spirit of those lines.'

IV

I had intended calling several other witnesses; but I must be content with one. Alec Fraser was a little old Scotsman, who lived about seven miles out from Mosgiel. I heard one day that he was very ill, and I drove over to see him. His daughter answered the door, showed me in, and placed a chair for me beside the bed. I noticed, on the other side of the bed, another chair. It stood directly facing the pillow, as if its occupant had been in earnest conversation with the patient.

'Ah, Alec,' I exclaimed, on greeting him, 'so I'm not your first visitor!'

He looked up surprised, and, in explanation, I glanced at the tell-tale position of the chair.

'Oh,' he said, with a smile, 'I'll tell ye aboot the chair by-and-by; but how are the wife and the weans and the kirk?'

I found that he was for too ill, however, to be wearied by general conversation. I read to him the Shepherd's Psalm; I led him to the Throne of Grace; and then I rose to go.

'Aboot the chair,' he said, as I took his hand, 'it's like this. Years ago I found I couldna pray. I fell asleep on my knees, and, even if I kept awake, my thochts were aye flittin'. One day, when I was sair worried aboot it, I spoke to Mr. Clair Mac-

kenzie, the meenister at Broad Point. We hadna a meenister o' oor ain at Mosgiel then. He was a guid auld man, was Mr. Mackenzie. And he telt me not to fash ma heed aboot kneeling down. "Jest sit ye down," he said, "and pit a chair agen ye for the Lord, and talk to Him just as though He sat beside ye!" An' I've been doin' it ever since. So now ye know what the chair's doin', standing the way it is!'

I pressed his hand and left him. A week later his daughter drove up to the manse. I knew everything, or almost everything, as soon as I saw her face.

'Father died in the night,' she sobbed. 'I had no idea that death was so near, and I had just gone to lie down for an hour or two. He seemed to be sleeping so comfortably. And, when I went back, he was gone! He didn't seem to have moved since I saw him last, except that *his hand was out on the chair.* Do you understand?'

I understood.

V

LIVING DOGS AND DEAD LIONS

I

Mosgiel was in the throes of an anniversary. As part of the programme, John Broadbanks and I were exchanging pulpits. In order to be on the spot when Sunday arrived, I was driven over to Silverstream on the Saturday evening. When I awoke on Sunday morning, and looking out of the Manse window, found the whole plain buried deep in snow, I was glad that I had taken this precaution. At breakfast we speculated on the chances of my having a congregation. Later on, however, the buggies began to arrive, and by eleven o'clock most of the homesteads were represented. But what about Sunday school in the afternoon? I told the teachers to feel under no obligation to come. 'I shall be here,' I said, 'and if any of the children put in an appearance, I shall be pleased to look after them.' When the afternoon came, there were three scholars present — Jack Linacre, who had ridden over on his pony from a farm about two miles away; Alec Crosby, a High School boy, who lived in a large house just across the fields; and little Myrtle Broadbanks—Goldilocks, as we called her—who had

accompanied me from the Manse. I decided to return with my three companions to the Manse and to hold our Sunday school by the fireside.

'Well,' I said, as soon as we were all cosily seated, 'I was reading this morning in the Bible about a living dog and a dead lion. Which would you rather be?' There was a pause. Jack was the first to speak.

'Oh, I'd rather be the living dog,' he blurted out; 'it's better to be alive than dead any day!'

'Oh, I don't know!' exclaimed Alec. Alec was a thoughtful boy who had already carried off two or three scholarships. He had been weighing the matter carefully while Jack was giving us the benefit of his first impressions. 'I don't know. A dead lion has been a living lion, while the living dog will be a dead dog some day. I think I'd rather be the dead lion.'

'Well, Goldilocks,' I said, turning to the little maiden at my side, 'and what do *you* think about it?'

'Oh,' she said, 'I think I'd like a little of both. I'd like to be *a lion* like the one and *alive* like the other!'

This all happened many years ago. Jack Linacre now owns the farm from which he then rode over; Alec Crosby is a doctor with a large practice in Sydney; and I heard of Goldilocks' wedding only a few weeks ago. I expect they have forgotten all about the snowy afternoon that we spent by the

fireside at Silverstream; but I smile still as I recall the answers that they gave to the question that I set them.

II

There is something to be said for Jack's way of looking at things. Our love of life is our master-passion. It animates us at every point. It is because we are in love with life that we see so much beauty in the dawning of a new day and find so wealthy a romance in the unfolding of the Spring. We feel that, among the myriad mysteries of the universe, there is no mystery so elusive and so sublime as this one. A living moth is a more wonderful affair than a dead moon. Indeed, we only recognize the strength of the hold that life has upon us when there is some question of its extinction. Let a man stand on the seashore, and, unable to help, watch an exhausted swimmer struggle for his life in the seething waters; let him look up and follow the movements of a steeplejack as he climbs a dizzy spire; let him visit a circus and see an artist hazard his life in the course of some sensational performance; and, for the moment, he will find his heart in his mouth. The blood will forsake his face; he will be filled with trepidation and palpitation; he can scarcely breathe! And why? The people in peril are nothing to him. For him, life would go on in just the same way whether they live or die. Yet their danger fills him with uncontrollable excite-

ment! Or look, if you will, in quite another direction.

I was in a tramcar yesterday afternoon. In the corner opposite was a lad—probably an errand-boy—curled up with a book. His sparkling eyes were glued to the pages; his face was flushed with excitement; he was completely lost to his immediate surroundings. I rose to leave the car. The movement evidently aroused him. He glanced out of the window, and then, with a start, shut the book and sprang up to follow me.

'Have you passed your proper corner?' I asked when, side by side, we reached the pavement.

'Yes, sir,' he said, 'I was reading the book and never noticed.'

'Exciting, was it?' I inquired, reaching out my hand for the volume. On the cover was a picture of a Red Indian galloping across the prairie, with a white girl thrown across the front of his saddle.

'My word, it was!' he replied. 'It's about a fellow who was flying for his life from the Indians and took refuge in a cave. And, when he got back into the dark part of the cave, he felt something warm and then heard the growl of a bear. My! I thought he was dead that time!'

And what did it matter? It was nothing to this errand-boy whether this hero of his—a mere frolic of an author's fancy—lived or died. And yet the life or death of that hero was of such moment to him that, for the time being, his mind

lost its hold upon realities in order that it might concentrate itself upon a fight among shadows! It is our intense, our persistent, our unquenchable love of life that explains the fascination of all tales of romance and adventure. 'With man as with the animals,' says Dr. James Martineau, 'death is the evil from which he himself most shrinks, and which he most deplores for those he loves; it is the utmost that he can inflict upon his enemy and the maximum which the penal justice of society can award to its criminals. It is the fear of death which gives their vivid interest to all hairbreadth escapes, in the shipwreck or amid the glaciers or in the fight; and it is man's fear of death that supplies the chief tragic element in all his art.' When we find ourselves following with breathless interest the movements of the traveller, the hunter or the explorer, we fancy that our emotion arises from a solicitude for the man himself. As a matter of fact, it arises from nothing of the kind. It arises from our love of *life-for-its-own-sake.*

In his *Lavengro,* George Borrow describes an open-air service which he attended on a large open moor. The preacher—a tall, thin man in a plain coat and with a calm, serious face—was urging his hearers not to love life overmuch and to prepare themselves for death. 'The service over,' Borrow says, 'I wandered along the heath till I came to a place where, beside a thick furze, sat a man, his eyes fixed intently on the red ball of the setting

sun.' It looked like his old comrade, Jasper Petulengro, the gipsy.

'Is that you, Jasper?'

'Indeed, brother!'

'And what,' enquired the newcomer, sitting by the gipsy's side, 'what is your opinion of death, Jasper?'

'Life is sweet, brother!'

'Do you think so?'

'Think so! There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?'

I need say no more in order to show that there is a good deal to be said for Jack Linacre's way of looking at things.

> How beautiful it is to be alive!
> To wake each morn as if the Maker's grace
> Did us afresh from nothingness derive
> That we might sing 'How happy is our case!
> How beautiful it is to be alive!'

From Jack's point of view there can be no doubt that one living dog is worth all the dead lions that ever were or will be!

III

Alec Crosby, however, is not so sure. 'A dead lion,' he points out, 'has been a living lion, while the living dog will be a dead dog some day.' There is something in that. He means, if I rightly catch

the drift of his philosophy, that you can pay too much for the privilege of being alive. Everything else has its price, and most of us buy our goods on too high a market. One man pays too much for popularity; he sells his conscience for it. Another pays too much for fame; it costs him his health. A third buys his money too dearly; in gaining the whole world he loses his own soul. And in the same way, a man may pay too much even for life itself. The dog, as Alec Crosby probably knew, is usually employed in Oriental literature as an emblem of the contemptible; the dog in our modern sense — Rover, Carlo and the rest — is unknown. The lion, on the other hand, is invariably the symbol of the courageous. Alec thinks that, all things considered, it is better to be a dead hero than a living coward. Alec reminds me of Artemus Ward. On the day of a general election, Artemus entered a polling-booth and began to look about him in evident perplexity. The returning officer approached and offered to help him.

'For whom do you desire to vote?' he asked.

'I want to vote for Henry Clay!' replied Artemus Ward.

'For Henry Clay!' exclaimed the astounded officer, 'why, Henry Clay has been dead for years!'

'Yes, I know,' replied Artemus Ward, 'but I'd rather vote for Henry Clay dead than for either of these men living!'

Alec Crosby could easily call a great host of

witnesses to support his view of the matter. Let me summon two—one from martyrology and one from fiction.

My first witness shall be Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. For his fidelity to the truth, Cranmer was sentenced to die at the stake. But every day during his imprisonment he was offered life and liberty if only he would sign the deed of recantation. Every morning the document was spread out before him and the pen placed in his hand. Day after day, he resisted the terrible temptation. But, as Jasper says, life is very sweet; the craving to live was too strong; Cranmer yielded. But, as soon as the horror of a cruel death had been removed, he felt that he had bought the boon of life at too high a price. The death with which he had been threatened was the death of a lion; the life that he was living was the life of a dog! He held himself in contempt and abhorrence. He cowered before the faces of his fellow men! Life on such terms was intolerable. He made a recantation of the recantation. As a token of his remorse, he burned to a cinder the hand with which he signed the cowardly document. And then, at peace with his conscience, he embraced a fiery death with a joyful heart. He felt that it was a thousand times better to be a dead lion than a living dog.

My witness from fiction is introduced to me by Maxwell Gray. In *The Silence of Dean Maitland,* he shows that life may be bought at too high a

price. Cyril Maitland had committed a murder; yet all the circumstances pointed to the guilt of his innocent friend, Henry Everard. Maitland felt every day that it was his duty to confess; but the lure of life was too strong for him; and, besides, he was a minister, and his confession would bring shame upon his sacred office! And so the years went by. While Everard languished in jail, having been sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment, Maitland advanced in popularity and won swift preferment. He became a dean. But his life was a torture to him. He felt that death—even the death that he had dreaded—would have been infinitely preferable. And, after suffering agonies such as Everard in prison never knew, he at last made a clean breast of his guilt and laid down the life for which he had paid too much. Thomas Cranmer and Dean Maitland would both take sides with Alec Crosby.

IV

But it was Goldilocks that, on that snowy afternoon at Silverstream, hit the nail on the head.

'I think I'd like a little of both,' she said. 'I'd like to be *a lion* like the one and *alive* like the other!'

Precisely! With her feminine facility for putting her finger on the very heart of things, Goldilocks has brushed away all irrelevancies and got to bedrock. For, after all, the question of life and death does not really concern us. A dog, living or dead, can

be nothing other than a dog; a lion, living or dead, can be nothing other than a lion. The dead lion, as Alec Crosby says, was a living lion once; the living dog will be a dead dog some day. Goldilocks helps us to clear the issue. The real alternative is not between life and death; for life and death come in turn to dog and lion alike. The real question is between the canine and the leonine. Shall I live contemptibly or shall I live courageously?

'And I looked,' says the last of the Biblical writers, 'and behold, a lion—*the Lion of the tribe of Juda!*'

Like a lion He lived! With the courage of a lion He died! And in leonine splendor He moves through all the world above. Goldilocks had evidently made up her mind, in life and in death, to model her character and experience upon His!

VI

NEW BROOMS

New brooms, they say, sweep clean. The statement is scarcely worth challenging. It is ridiculous upon the face of it. How can new brooms sweep clean? New brooms do not sweep at all. If they sweep, they are not new brooms: they have been used; the dealer will not receive them back into stock; they are obviously second-hand. But I need not stress that point. My antagonism to the ancient saw rests on other grounds.

New brooms, they say, sweep clean. It is invariably a cynic who says it. He seizes the proverb as he would seize a bludgeon; and, with it, he makes a murderous attack on the first young enthusiast he happens to meet. It is a barbarous weapon, and can be wielded by an expert with deadly effects. It is a thousand times worse than a shillalah, a tomahawk, a baton, or a club; with either of these a man can break your head; but with the saying about the new broom he can break your heart. I well remember the public meeting at which I was formally welcomed to Mosgiel. Among the speakers was an old minister of the severely conservative type, with whom I subsequently grew very intimate.

But at that stage, as he himself told me afterwards, he deeply resented my coming. He regarded it as an intrusion. He said, in the course of his speech, that he confidently expected to hear, during the next few months, the most glowing accounts of the work at the Mosgiel Church. That, he cruelly observed, was the usual thing. A young minister's first year among his people is, he remarked, a year of *admiration;* the second is a year of *toleration;* and the third, a year of *abomination.* New brooms, he said, sweep clean. The jest, I dare say, rolled from the memories of the people like water from a duck's back. I doubt if they gave it a second thought. They probably remarked to one another as they drove back to their farms that the old gentleman was in a droll humor. But, to me, his words were like the thrust of a sword; he stabbed me to the quick. There was never a day during those first three years at Mosgiel, but the wound ached and smarted. Long afterwards, I reminded the old gentleman of his jest; and he most solemnly assured me that he had not the slightest recollection of ever having uttered it. Which only proves that our thoughtless thrusts are often just as painful as our malicious ones. I have long since forgiven my old friend. Indeed, I do not know that I have much to forgive. For, after all, his stinging jibe only made me resolve to prove its falsity. For more than a thousand mornings I rose from my bed vowing that at the end of three years, and at the end

of thirty, the broom should be sweeping as cleanly as ever. The old minister has been in his grave for many years now; and I have nothing but benedictions to heap upon his honored name.

The cult of the new broom is a most pernicious one. No heresy has done more harm. The woman who really believes that new brooms sweep clean will endeavor to keep the broom new as long as she possibly can. And that is not what brooms are for. Brooms are to use; and, as soon as you begin to use them, they cease to be *new* brooms. The point is a vital one. About three hundred years ago, one of the choicest spirits in English history was passing away. George Macdonald says of him that one of the keenest delights of the life to come will be the joy of seeing the face of George Herbert 'with whom to talk humbly will be in bliss a higher bliss.' As George Herbert lay dying, he drew from beneath his pillow the roll of manuscripts that contained the poems that are now so famous. 'Deliver this,' he said, 'to my dear brother, Nicholas Ferrar, and tell him that he will find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that passed between God and my soul before I could subject my will to the will of Jesus my Master.' The verses were published, and have come to be esteemed as one of the priceless possessions of the Church universal. And among them, strangely enough, I find a striking reference to this matter of new brooms. 'What wretchedness,' George Herbert asks,

> 'What wretchedness can give him any room
> Whose house is foul while he adores the broom?'

And here is George Herbert telling us on his deathbed that this reflects some deep spiritual conflict between God and his own soul! What can he mean? He means, of course, that it is possible to be so much in love with your new dress that you are afraid to wear it. You may be so enamored of your new spade that you shrink from soiling it. You may—to return to the poet's imagery—so adore your new broom that you allow all your floors to become dusty and foul.

And herein lies one of life's cardinal sins. In his lecture on *The Valley of Diamonds,* John Ruskin discusses the nature of covetousness. What is covetousness? Wherein does it differ from the legitimate desire for wealth? Up to a certain point the desire for riches is admirable. It develops intellectual alertness in the individual, and, in the aggregate, builds up our national prosperity. If nobody wished to be rich, the resources of the country would never be exploited. Why should men trouble to clear the bush or sink mines or erect factories or cultivate farms? Apart from the lure of wealth we should be a people of sluggish wit and savage habits. Viewed in this light, the desire for wealth is not only pardonable; it is admirable. At what point does it curdle into covetousness and threaten our undoing? Ruskin draws the line

sharply. The desire for wealth is good, he argues, as long as we have *some use* for the riches that we acquire; it deteriorates into mere covetousness as soon as we crave to possess it for the sheer sake of possessing it and apart from any *use* to which we propose to put it. 'Fix your desire on anything useless,' he says, 'and all the pride and folly of your heart will mix with that desire; and you will become at last wholly inhuman, a mere, ugly lump of stomach and suckers, like a cuttlefish.' John Ruskin's vigorous prose throws a flood of light on George Herbert's cryptic poetry. So far as I have it in my heart to use my new broom for the cleansing of my home and the comfort of my fellows, my new broom may be a means of grace to me and them; but, so far as I view the new broom merely as a possession, and irrespective of the service in which it should be worn out, my pride in it is bad as bad can be.

John Ruskin reminds me of Le Sage. 'Before reading the story of my life,' he makes Gil Blas to say, 'listen to a tale I am about to tell thee!' And then he tells of the two tired and thirsty students who, travelling together from Pennafiel to Salamanca, sat down by a roadside spring. Near the spring they noticed a flat stone, and on the stone they soon detected some letters. The inscription was almost effaced, partly by the teeth of time and partly by the feet of the flocks that came to water at the fountain. But, after washing it well, they

were able to make out the words *'Here is interred the soul of the Licentiate Peter Garcias.'* The first of the students roared with laughter and treated the affair as purely a joke. 'Here lies *a soul!*'—what an idea! A soul under a stone! The second, however, took it more seriously and began to dig. He at length came upon a leather purse containing a hundred ducats, and a card, on which was written in Latin the following sentence: *'Thou who hast had wit enough to discover the meaning of the inscription, inherit my money, and make a better use of it than I have!'*

'The *soul* of the Licentiate Peter Garcias!'

'Make *a better use* of it than I have!'

Poor Peter Garcias felt that his shining ducats had been a curse and not a blessing, because he had loved them for their own sake instead of for the sake of the use to which they could be put. 'Make *a better use* of them than I have!' he implored. Peter Garcias would have understood exactly what George Herbert meant by the worship of the new broom.

But I need not have gone abroad for my illustration. It is a far cry from George Herbert to George Eliot; yet George Eliot has furnished us with the most telling exposition of George Herbert's recondite remark. For George Eliot has given us *Silas Marner.* Indeed, she has given us two Silas Marners. We have Silas Marner the miser, gloating greedily over the guineas that he afterwards lost;

and, later on, we have Silas Marner, strong, unselfish, tender-hearted, rejoicing in the wealth that he has now regained. Let us glance, first at the one and then at the other.

We peep at him as he appears in the second chapter. 'So, year after year, Silas Marner had lived in this solitude, his guineas rising in the iron pot, and his life narrowing and hardening itself more and more into a mere pulsation of desire and satisfaction that had no relation to any other being. His life had reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding, *without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended.* Marner's face shrank; his eyes that used to look trusting and dreamy now looked as if they had been made to see only one kind of thing for which they hunted everywhere; and he was so withered and yellow that, although he was not yet forty, the children always called him "Old Master Marner."'

This was Silas Marner the miser! Then followed the loss of the money; the hoarded guineas were all stolen, and Silas was like a man demented! Then little Eppie stole into his home and heart. When he saw her for the first time, curled up on the hearth, the flickering firelight playing on her riot of golden hair, he thought his long-lost guineas had come back in this new form, and he loved *her* as he had once loved *them.* He would take her on his knee and tell her wonderful stories, and,

in the long summer evenings, would stroll out into the meadows, thick with buttercups, and would make garlands for her hair and teach her to distinguish the songs of the birds. And so the years go by till Eppie is a bonny girl of eighteen—always in trouble about her golden hair, for no other girl of her acquaintance has hair like it, and, smooth it as she may, it will not be hidden under her pretty brown bonnet. And then comes the great discovery. The pond in the Stone Pit runs dry, and in its slimy bed are found the skeleton of the thief and—the long-lost guineas! That evening Silas and Eppie sat together in the cottage. George Eliot describes the transfiguration which his love for Eppie had effected in the countenance of Silas. 'She drew her chair towards his knees, and leaned forward, holding both his hands, while she looked up at him.' On the table near them, lit by a candle, lay the recovered gold—the old long-loved gold, ranged in orderly heaps, as Silas used to range it in the days when it was his only joy. He had been telling her how he used to count it every night, and how his soul was utterly desolate till she was sent to him.

'Eh, my precious child,' he cried, 'if you hadn't been sent to save me, I should ha' gone to the grave in my misery. The money was taken away from me in time; and you see it's been kept—kept till it was wanted for you. It's wonderful—our life is wonderful!'

It is indeed! But the wonderful thing for us

at this moment is the contrast between these two Silas Marners. They are both rich. But the first is rich and wretched; the second is rich and happy. And the secret! The secret is that, in his first possession of the guineas, he loved them for their own sake, irrespective of any use to which they could be put; in his subsequent possession of the self-same guineas he loved them for the sake of the happiness that they could purchase for Eppie.

The *first* Silas Marner knew the wretchedness that George Herbert describes—the wretchedness of the man 'whose house is foul while he adores his broom'; the *second* Silas Marner was willing that the broom should be worn out in sweeping all the obstacles and difficulties out of Eppie's path.

In telling her story, George Eliot remarks incidentally that wiser men than Silas Marner often repeat his mistake. The only difference is that, while Silas Marner amassed *money* without considering the uses to which it could be put, these wiser misers accumulate *knowledge* in the same aimless way. They abandon themselves to some erudite research, some ingenious project or some well-knit theory; and it brings them little joy because it stands related to no actual need. It is a new broom and will remain a new broom; it will never brush away any of the world's sorrows or sweep together any of its long-lost treasures. Knowledge, like money, is a noble thing. But, as with money, so with knowledge, it derives its nobleness from the

ends which it is designed to compass. Every nation has a right to rejoice in its universities. The university is the glory of civilization. But, unless we keep both eyes wide open, the university may come to resemble the hole in the cottage floor in which Silas Marner hoarded his gold. Let the student of engineering remember that he is accumulating knowledge, not that he may possess more of it than his rivals and competitors, but that he may do more than they towards surmounting the obstacles that block the path of human progress. Let the medical student remember that he is amassing knowledge, not that he may flourish the academic distinctions he has won, but that he may lessen the sum of human anguish and save human life. And let the theological student reflect that he is winning for himself a scholarly renown, not that he may rejoice in his attainments and distinctions for their own sake, but that, by means of them, he may the more effectively and skillfully lead all kinds and conditions of men into the kingdom and service of his Lord.

And so I come back to my starting-point. The broom that sweeps clean is not a new broom. After commencing this chapter I happened to pick up a report of the British and Foreign Bible Society. On one of its pages I find a story told by the society's colporteur at Port Said. He boarded an incoming steamer, and, on the lower deck, found a German sailor sweeping out a cabin. The man was greatly

depressed. In the course of conversation, each claimed to be a greater sinner than the other.

'What!' exclaimed the sailor, 'why, you are the first man to tell me that he is a greater sinner than I am!'

He took a Gospel from the colporteur's hands and began to read.

'Ah,' he sighed, 'that I were a little child again and could read it with a clean heart!'

The remark was overheard by some of his shipmates.

'Is that *you,* Jansen?' they asked; 'what wonder has happened to you?'

'No wonder at all,' the man replied. *'I want to sweep out my heart, and I am buying a broom!'*

The broom that he bought is by no means a new one, but it sweeps wonderfully clean for all that!

VII

A GOOD WIFE AND A GALLANT SHIP

I

Why is a good wife like a gallant ship? This is not a riddle; it is a sincere and earnest inquiry. An ancient philosopher in the East and a modern poet in the West have both remarked upon the resemblance between the two. Solomon spent nearly half his life thinking about ships. He was the only Jewish king who felt much enthusiasm for maritime affairs. Solomon reminds me of Peter the Great. Those who have perused Waliszewski's biography of that monarch are scarcely likely to forget the passage in which the historian describes the finding, by the boy Peter, of the broken boat. It was only an old, half-rotten wooden skiff, thrown to the scrap-heap with some useless lumber in the little village of Ismailof; but, captivating the boy's fancy, and stirring his imagination, he could not take his eyes from it. It changed the whole current of his life. He is destined to rule over a great continental people who have no access to the sea. Yet, from that day, he dreams of nothing but brave ships and romantic voyages. He comes to England to learn shipbuilding. He returns to Russia and builds useless navies. He claps his hands in delirious

ecstasy as he launches his huge toys on his inland lakes. He is like a caged eagle; the passion of the infinite throbs in his veins, yet he is cribbed, cabined, and confined in this cruel way!

Solomon was in a very similar case. He ruled over a people who regarded the sea with distrust and disdain. Yet he himself heard in his soul the challenging call of the mighty waters. The ships! The ships that bring the food! The merchant ships! The ships that lie becalmed in the oily seas of the tropics; the ships that get caught in the ice-pack at the poles; the ships that fight their way doggedly through howling gales and icy blizzards round the cape! Those stately ships, with their dizzy masts and shapely bows, captivated his imagination; and when he desired to speak of the virtuous and faithful housewife in terms of superlative appreciation, the only image that seemed worthy of her was the gallant ship riding at anchor in the bay. *'Who can find a virtuous woman?'* he asks, *'for her price is far above rubies. She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar.'*

II

So much for the Eastern philosopher; now for the Western bard! Longfellow likens a good wife to a gallant ship; and, in order that we may see how much alike the two are, he places them side by side. He describes the old shipbuilder who has

resolved to build one more ship, his last and his best. He comes down to the yards, his eyes sparkling with enthusiasm, carrying the model in his hand. He approaches his assistant, shows him the model, and confides to him his dream. The younger man, a stalwart and fiery youth, has a dream of his own. He aspires to marry his master's daughter. The two are engrossed in conversation, the elder man depicting to the younger the stately ship that is to be. He will build a vessel that shall laugh at all disaster, and with wave and whirlwind wrestle. And he concludes his eager communication by promising that 'the day that giveth her to the sea shall give my daughter unto thee.' The younger man starts at the radiant prospect.

> And as he turned his face aside
> With a look of joy and a thrill of pride.
> Standing before her father's door
> He saw the form of his promised bride.
> The sun shone on her golden hair
> And her cheek was glowing fresh and fair
> With the breath of morn and the soft sea air.
> Like a beauteous barge was she———

And so on. All through the poem, right up to the wedding on the ship's deck on the day of her launching, Longfellow draws the analogy between the shapely vessel, the bride of the ocean, and the fair maiden, the bride of the proud young builder.

'She is like the merchant ships!' says the ancient Eastern sage.

'Like a beauteous barge was she!' exclaims the Western poet.

It is difficult to resist the testimony of two such witnesses.

III

Neither the good wife nor the gallant ship need resent the analogy. If the good wife does not like being compared to a ship, let her sit down for five minutes and think, and it will occur to her that, of all our ingenious inventions and bewildering contrivances, a ship is the only one that has a divine origin and a divine authority. The ark was the first ship; and its plans and specifications were divinely dictated. Moreover, it is obvious that, since the Lord God divided His world into islands and continents, with vast expanses of ocean rolling between, and commanded that all those scattered territories should be peopled and developed, He contemplated the existence of the ships. The ships were part of the original programme. The ships were to be the instruments of those distributive and mediative ministries on which the history of the world was to be based.

Or, if instead of thinking abstract thoughts, the good wife prefers to read, let her reach down Rudyard Kipling's ballad of the *Big Steamers.*

'Oh, where are you going to, all you Big Steamers,
With England's own coal, up and down the salt seas?'
'We are going to fetch you your bread and your butter.
Your beef, pork, and mutton, eggs, apples, and cheese,

For the bread that you eat, and the biscuits you nibble,
The sweets that you suck and the joints that you carve,
They are brought to you daily by all us Big Steamers,
And if anyone hinders our coming you'll starve!'

The ships, then, represent the indispensabilities of life, the things without which we cannot live. I am writing here in Australia. And even here in Australia, with our immense open spaces, spaces in which we can grow almost anything, how dependent we are upon the coming of the ships! We need the ships; ships to bring us our supplies from the great looms and factories of the old world; ships to take the produce of our boundless plains to the congested populations of the other hemisphere; ships to bring the letters for which our hearts are hungry, and to take the letters for which distant friends are waiting. Even here in Australia the ships are the light of our eyes and the breath of our nostrils. Even here in Australia, the good wife, when she spreads her table in the morning, brings her food from afar. For none of these dainties that tempt my appetite and nourish my frame are *native* foods. They were not here until the ships began to come. The wheat is not indigenous; the meat is not native meat. The corn and the cattle and the coffee came to Australia on the ships. And, but for the ships, we ourselves could never have been here. Let a man register a vow that he will not eat, drink, wear or use anything that has—in a remote or in an immediate sense—been upon a ship; and he will be

reduced to abject wretchedness in no time. God has built His world in such a way that the ship is the foundation of everything.

> Each climate needs what other climes produce,
> And offers something to the general use;
> No land but listens to the common call,
> And, in return, receives supplies from all.

The Great Weaver stands continually at His loom working out an intricate and beautiful pattern. The nations are the threads that run up and down, up and down, not far apart, yet never meeting. The gallant ship is the shuttle, the busy shuttle, that flies to and fro, to and fro, weaving them all into one compact and wonderful whole. The web depends entirely on the shuttle; the world depends entirely on the ships.

IV

I never see a great ship come into port at the end of a long voyage without feeling a sense of admiration, amounting almost to awe, at the masterly achievement. To say nothing of the perils to which she has been exposed at sea, it seems an amazing thing that, after having been for months on the trackless waters, she can pick up the heads as easily as though she had been following a well-blazed trail. There is a famous story on record in the *Memoirs of Captain Basil Hall.* It tells how the erudite commander once brought his vessel round Cape Horn on

a voyage from San Blas to Rio de Janeiro. Without any other observations than those of the sun and moon, he laid his vessel, in a thick fog, outside what he believed to be the entrance to the harbor. The fog cleared, and the land slowly loomed up through it—the first that had been seen for more than three months. It was Rio! The sailors were electrified at the accuracy of their commander's calculations, and, rushing to the bridge, greeted him, by way of congratulation, with three ringing cheers! I suppose no man ever watched a brave ship drop anchor in the bay at the end of her voyage without some such feeling as this. And certainly no man ever looked into the face of his bride on his wedding day without being conscious of some such emotion. *'She is like the merchant ship; she bringeth her food from afar.'* It seems so wonderful to the bridegroom that she should have reached his side in safety. The chances against her safe arrival were a million to one. She is the daughter of a thousand generations. For countless centuries her ancestors were fighting men. If, in that long chain of warring progenitors, only one had fallen before he mated, she could never have been born. Time after time, in those rude days, the earth was desolated by war, pestilence, and famine; yet the line of genealogy that led to *her* remained unbroken! More than once whole nations were depopulated by the plague. But still her ancestry was unaffected. The providence that guards the good ship on the seething

waters, bringing it safely through storm and tempest to its desired haven, watched over her as she floated down the restless ages to her husband's side. She was like the ark, upborne by the very waters that destroyed everything beside; or, to return to Solomon's simile, *'she is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar.'* Her safe arrival seems a miracle, and a golden miracle at that. It seems to her husband that, threatened by such perils as she has braved, only an escort of angels could have brought her safely to his side. And he bows his head in wondering gratitude.

V

We owe everything to the ships. All our food comes from afar. Yes, all of it, including food for thought. The school, the college, the university; they all resemble the virtuous housewife spreading her table. They bring food from afar. Only this afternoon I was shown over Dennington College. The Principal, Miss Gertrude Milman, B.A., took me into a class-room in which a geography lesson was in progress. The teacher was giving her pupils food from afar. Hardy adventurers and patient explorers sailed across unknown seas, charted unknown lands, and returned with the priceless results of their hazardous investigations. And those results, brought home by the ships, were being dispensed in the class-room at Dennington College. Miss Milman herself teaches philosophy. But she

owes it all to the ships. Far away over the sea, Plato and Aristotle and Socrates wrestled with the problems of the universe in the old days; and far away over the sea Kant and Hegel and Bergson pondered those same problems in a later time; and the ships have brought us the wealthy fruitage of their profound cogitations. 'And here,' Miss Milman told me, 'the girls assemble in the morning for the scripture lesson.' I do not know exactly how that half-hour is spent; but I am certain that, even then, Miss Milman sets before her pupils food from afar. The Bible itself has come to us across the ocean. The world is only rolling into light because the ships, with their white sails, have dotted every sea. 'The prayers you offer,' says J. M. Neale, 'the prayers you offer, the hymns you sing, the books of devotion you use, how far, far hence in *time,* how far, far hence in *distance,* do their sources lie? Perhaps from some quaint mediæval German house, with its surrounding fields and lanes and gardens buried deep in snow, you get a prayer which we use at Christmastide. Perhaps from the dog days of an Andalusian Convent, with its orange trees and its pomegranates and its fountains, you get such music as that lovely introit, "Like as the hart desireth after the waterbrooks." Perhaps from the tomb of a martyr you get such a hymn as "O God, Thy soldiers' crown and guard." ' Prayers, music, hymns; they are all the same. They come from afar, from afar. I left Dennington College

feeling that, after all, Miss Milman is very much like Solomon's housewife; she is entirely dependent on the ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

VI

Now that I come to look a little more closely at the comely features of this virtuous woman—the woman who is like the merchant ships—I fancy that I recognize her. For she is none other than the Bride, the Lamb's wife. When the Church spreads her white cloth, and sets her wondrous table, she invariably decks it with food from afar. Listen as she invites you to partake of her heavenly fare!

'The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.'

And listen again:

'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee and be thankful.'

Food from afar! Food from afar! She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar! Such viands can have been procured from no earthy source. This Bread was made from wheat that grew in no earthly field; this Wine was pressed from clusters that hung on no earthly vine.

The happy guests who sit at the Church's table find that, as they partake of her sacred hospitalities, there is ministered to them a comfort that wipes all tears from all faces, a hope that transfigures with strange radiance every unborn day, and a peace that passeth all understanding. They know, as they taste this delectable fare, that such fruits grew in no earthly garden. And then, with faces that shine like the faces of the angels, they remember at whose table they are seated, and they say one to another, *'She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar.'* And that golden testimony is true.

PART II

I

ODD VOLUMES

We have had a kind of wedding in my study this morning. The bride arrived by post. It happened in this wise. Twenty years ago I attended an auction sale at Mosgiel. A valuable library was under the hammer and the chance was too good to be missed. The books were all tied up in bundles and laid out on tables. I took a note of the numbers of those lots that contained works that I wanted. When, on the arrival of the carrier's cart, I proudly inspected my purchases, I found among them an odd volume. It was the first part of *Foster's Life and Correspondence.* The book was bound up with a number of others, and I could not buy *them* without becoming responsible for *it.* My first inclination was to throw it away; and the temptation recurred when I left Mosgiel for Hobart, and again when I left Hobart for Armadale. Of what use was an odd volume? In packing up at Hobart I actually tossed it to the heap of rubbish that was to be left behind; but an aching void in the last case led to its ultimate rescue. This is the first part of our little romance.

Last week I was visiting a country minister. In the ordinary course of things, I glanced over his

book-shelves. I was just turning away, when, among some dusty volumes away on the topmost shelf, my eye caught the words *Foster's Life and Correspondence.* It, too, was an odd volume. On hearing of my own experience, the good man urged me to transfer the volume to my portmanteau and say no more about it. It was, he said, of no use to him.

'But, my dear fellow,' I replied, 'I might just as well say that *mine* is of no use to *me.* We must leave the matter in the meantime. It is so long since I looked at the volume on my shelves that I cannot be sure that they are companions. They may be duplicates. Yours, I see, is *Volume Two.* If, on my return, I find that mine is *Volume One,* we will come to some arrangement. If not, neither of us can help the other.'

My Mosgiel purchase turned out to be the *first* volume. I posted my friend a copy of *Bleak House,* which, as I happened to know, he had never read, and he forwarded the *Foster* by return of post. And this morning I took the odd volume from the lumber on the top shelf, introduced it to its mate, and now the two stand proudly side by side among my biographies. They make a handsome pair: no bride and bridegroom could look more perfectly matched. I do not suppose that they had ever met before; but that circumstance in itself presents no lawful impediment to their being united in a lifelong partnership.

The mating of books is a very mechanical affair. At a big publishing house you may see two huge cases side by side, just as they have come from the printer's. The one is packed with copies of *Volume One;* the other contains copies of *Volume Two.* An assistant, asked by a customer for a copy of the complete work, takes a book from the one box and a book from the other; claps them together with a bang; and they are mated for all time to come. There is no question of selection, and no question of consent. There is no *'Wilt thou have . . . '* and no *'I will.'* The volume in the top right-hand corner of the one box is unable to steal a shy and furtive glance at the book lying in a corresponding position in the other box. His destined partner may be a little plumper or a little thinner than himself; she may be neatly attired in a pretty cover that sets off her charms to perfection, or she may be dressed in an ill-fitting wrapper that is smudged or torn; he cannot tell. He can only wait, and she can only wait, until they are unceremoniously snatched from their respective corners, banged together, and thus, for richer for poorer, for better for worse, made partners in a bond that is indissoluble. There is no question of sexual selection such as Darwin, Wallace, and the great biologists like to portray. The books in the one box do not strut and parade and show off their beauties in order to win the admiration of the books in the other box. That may be because they are

conscious that they are all so much alike; they feel that there is little to pick and choose between them; or, on the other hand, it may be because they suspect that the books in the other box are all much of a muchness, and that it matters very little which bride each bridegroom has. But, whatever the reason, there it is! There is no element of selection such as we find in the fields and the forests; there is no lovemaking and courtship such as we mortals know; the volumes are arbitrarily paired off, and the thing is done.

And, strangely enough, they appear to belong to each other from that very moment. One would feel that he was conniving at a kind of literary adultery if he were to take the second volume of *this* set and the second volume of *that* set and deliberately transpose them. I call the earth and the heavens to witness that, in my procedure this morning, I have been guilty of no such enormity. We are living in a rough world. With some books, as with some people, things go hardly. In the course of years a volume may be cruelly deserted by its companion; or its partner may come to an untimely end. The law of the land provides that in such sad cases, a second marriage is no shame. One does not like to think of my first volume of *Foster* spending all its days among the lumber on *my* top shelf, and of my friend's second volume spending all its days in the dust and neglect of *his* top shelf. I do not often take my stand on my

ministerial dignity; but I maintain that, being a minister, I have at least as good a right as any publisher's assistant to take those two sad and lonely volumes—the one from my top shelf in the city, and the other from my friend's top shelf in the country—and to unite them in the holy bond of matrimony. And as they stand before me side by side—never to perch upon a top shelf any more—I feel that I have done myself, my friend and them good service by having taken pity on their loneliness and launched them on a united career of happiness and usefulness. As things stood, neither was of any use to anybody; their union has made it possible for each to fulfill its destiny.

Let it be distinctly understood that I am not writing of *single* volumes. A single volume is not an *odd* volume. As I sit here at my desk and survey my shelves, I see at a glance that many of the books are complete in one volume. It would be the height of absurdity for me to take one such book, say *Pilgrim's Progress,* and another such book, say *Pickwick Papers,* and declare them *Volumes One* and *Two* for the mere sake of pairing them off. Neither the publisher's assistant nor the minister is vested with authority to mate the books after so arbitrary a fashion. The *Pilgrim's Progress* is a single volume, and the *Pickwick Papers* is a single volume; and it is better for them to do the work that they were sent into the world to do as single volumes, rather than to enter into an alliance that

will make them each ridiculous and stultify them both. I am not arguing for the celibacy of the clergy or for the celibacy of the laity; how could I consistently adopt such a line of reasoning immediately after having celebrated the marriage of the *Fosters*? I am simply telling all the single volumes in my study—who are looking a little downcast and unhappy now that the excitement of the wedding is past—that *single* volumes are not *odd* volumes. It is very nice, of course, to be happily mated; but it is quite possible for a solitary life to be a very useful one. Robert Louis Stevenson would have gone further. In his *Virginibus Puerisque* he as good as says that no man can be a hero after he is married. The fact that he has a home of his own, and is surrounded by love and tenderness and thoughtful care, militates against the culture of the sterner virtues. 'If comfortable,' Stevenson says, 'marriage is not heroic. It inevitably narrows and damps the spirit of generous men. In marriage a man becomes stark and selfish, and undergoes a fatty degeneration of his moral being. The air of the fireside withers up all the fine wildings of the husband's heart. He is so comfortable and happy that he begins to prefer comfort and happiness to anything else on earth, his wife included. Yesterday he would have shared his last shilling; to-day his first duty is to his family,' and is fulfilled in large measure by laying down vintages and husbanding the health of an in-

valuable parent. Twenty years ago this man was equally capable of crime or heroism; now he is fit for neither. His soul is asleep, and you may speak without restraint; for you will not waken him.

In his references to women, Stevenson does not speak quite so confidently. 'It is true,' he says, 'that some of the merriest and most genuine of women are old maids, and that those old maids, and wives who are unhappily married, have often most of the motherly touch. And this would seem to show, even for women, the same narrowing influence in comfortable married life.' Yet, on the other hand, he feels that marriage affects a woman differently. It makes greater demands upon her. The very comfort which is the husband's peril is largely the fruit of her thoughtfulness, her industry and her unselfishness. With wifehood, too, comes motherhood; and motherhood, side by side with felicities that only mothers know, inflicts a ceaseless discipline of suffering and self-denial. 'For women,' Stevenson admits, 'there is less danger. Marriage is of so much use to a woman, opens out so much more in life, and puts her in the way of so much freedom and usefulness that, whether she marry ill or well, she can hardly miss the benefit.' And he sums up by advising you, 'If you wish the pick of men and women, take a good bachelor and a good wife.' Since, however, if all women became good wives, all men could not remain good bachelors, it is obvious that Stevenson is crying for

the moon. But he has said enough to dispel the gloomy and downcast looks that disfigured the countenances of all my single volumes immediately after the wedding. Single volumes are certainly not odd volumes; they are complete in themselves; and we are all very glad of them.

But there are odd volumes. Charles Wagner says that 'in certain shelters for old people, where husbands and wives may pass a tranquil old age together, a very expressive term is used to designate one who is left alone. The bereft solitary is called *an odd volume*. How appropriate—like a book astray from its companion tome! Odd volumes indeed, those who have hitherto been one of two inseparables! They celebrated their silver and golden weddings, and suddenly find themselves desolate. They seem like guests left behind at the end of the feast or the play; the lights are out, the curtain is down; they wander about in the emptiness like souls in torment, possessed with the idea of continually searching for something they have lost. They hardly refrain from asking "Have you seen my husband?" "Where shall I find my wife?" Odd volumes, these!' And you may find them in palaces as well as in almshouses. Did we not all hear the cry that rang through the halls of Windsor on the day on which the Prince Consort passed away? 'I have no one now to call me "Victoria"!' And there are others. They knew no golden wedding, no silver wedding, no wedding at all; and yet

felt themselves mated. Some, like Evangeline and Gabriel—and like my two *Fosters*—are separated by distance and ignorance of each other's whereabouts. Some, like Drumsheugh and Marget Howe, are separated by the iron hand of circumstance; some are kept apart by cruel misunderstandings and mistaken judgments; and some—

> Women there are on earth, most sweet and high,
> Who lose their own, and walk bereft and lonely,
> Loving that one lost heart until they die
> Loving it only.
>
> And so they never see beside them grow
> Children, whose coming is like breath of flowers;
> Consoled by subtler loves than angels know
> Through childless hours.
>
> Faithful in life, and faithful unto death,
> Such souls, in sooth, illume with lustre splendid
> That glimpsed, glad land wherein, the Vision saith,
> Earth's wrongs are ended.

The purest spirit that ever walked this earth of ours was—I say it reverently—an odd volume. I do not mean that He was a single volume: I mean far more than that. He felt that He was not single: He was not complete in Himself. In some wonderful and mystical way, Deity and Humanity were odd volumes; volumes that were intended to supplement and complete each other; volumes that had become alienated and torn asunder. The amazing thing about the Scriptures is that, in both

Testaments, they employ the very phraseology of mating and marriage. The quest that led to the Cross is the quest of the lover for His betrothed; and the consummation of all things is to be a marriage supper—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And it may be that, in the larger, the lesser is included. It may be that when Deity and Humanity, so long estranged, are at length perfectly united, other odd volumes will find their mates and the isolations of this life be swallowed up in the glad reunions of the life everlasting.

II

O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT

I

Lexie Drummond had a place of her own in the hearts of the Mosgiel people. To begin with, she was lonely; and lonely folk have a remarkable way of exacting secret homage. Lexie worked at a loom in the woollen factory, and lived by herself in one of the factory cottages near by. I wish you could have seen it. The door invariably stood open, even when Lexie was away at her work. Everything was faultlessly natty and clean. An enormous tabby cat, 'Matey,' purred on the mat, while a golden canary sang bravely from his cage in the creeper just outside the door. Lexie had a trim little garden, in which she grew lavender and mignonette, roses and carnations. Lexie's white carnations always took the prize at our local Flower Show. Lexie mothered Mosgiel. If anybody was in trouble, she would be sure to drop in; and, in cases of serious sickness, she would often stay the night. Some people would deny that Lexie was beautiful; yet she had a loveliness peculiar to herself. She was tall, finely-built, and wonderfully strong. When Roger Gunton, the heaviest man on the plain, was seized with sudden illness, and his

body was racked with excruciating pain, Lexie alone could turn him from side to side, and he would allow nobody else to touch him. If her face lacked the vivacity and sparkle of more voluptuous beauties, it possessed, nevertheless, a quiet gravity, a serious winsomeness, that rendered it extremely attractive. The furrows in her face, and the strands of grey in her hair, made her look older than she really was. Everybody knew Lexie's age; her name was a perpetual reminder of the number of her years. For, in an unguarded moment, she had once revealed the circumstance that she was born on the day on which the Princess of Wales—afterwards Queen Alexandra—was married, and she was named after the royal bride. Mosgiel never forgot personal details of that kind. In addition to all this, Mosgiel vaguely suspected that Lexie carried a secret in her breast. She came to Mosgiel only a few years before I did; and everybody felt that her previous history was involved in tantalizing mystery.

II

It was Friday night. In the dining-room at the Mosgiel manse we were enjoying a quiet evening by the fire. I was lounging in an armchair with a novel. I could afford to be restful, for, that week, I had but one sermon to prepare. On the approaching Sunday, the anniversary of the Sunday school was to be celebrated; in the morning John

Broadbanks and I were exchanging pulpits in honor of the occasion; and, availing myself of a minister's immemorial prerogative, I had decided to preach an old sermon at Silverstream. All at once we were startled by the ringing of the front-door bell. It was the Sunday school superintendent.

'We are in an awful hole,' he exclaimed, after having discussed the weather, the health of our respective families, and a few other inevitable preliminaries. 'Lexie Drummond has been taken ill, and the doctor won't hear of her leaving the house for a week or two. She has been preparing the children for their part-songs, and has the whole programme at her fingers' ends; I don't know how on earth we are going to manage without her.'

I promised to run down and see Lexie about it first thing in the morning; and did so. Lexie was confined to her bed, and old Janet Davidson was nursing her. 'Matey' was curled up close to his mistress's feet, while the canary was singing blithely from his cage near the open window. I saw at a glance that Lexie had been crying, and I attributed her grief to anxiety and disappointment in connection with the anniversary. She quickly undeceived me.

'You'll never notice that I'm not there,' she said, with a watery smile. 'The children know their parts thoroughly, and Bella Christie, who has been helping me, is as familiar with the program as I am.'

I assured her that we should miss her sadly; but expressed my relief that everything had been so well arranged.

'And now, Lexie,' I said, as I took her hand in parting, 'you must worry no more about it; we will do our very best to make it pass off well.'

'Oh,' she replied, quickly, recognizing in my words a reference to her tell-tale eyes, 'it wasn't the anniversary that I was worrying about; indeed, it was silly of me to cry at all!' And, to show how extremely silly it was, she broke, with womanish perversity, into a fresh outburst of tears.

'She has something she wants to tell you,' Janet interposed, 'but she doesn't like to.'

Lexie pretended to look vexed at the old lady's garrulity; but I fancied that I detected, behind the frown, a look of real relief.

'Some other time,' she said. 'Good-bye, I shall think of you all to-morrow!' Janet opened the door and I left her.

III

The anniversary passed off happily; Lexie was soon herself again; and, a fortnight later, I saw her in her old place at church. We knew that she would insist on taking her class in the afternoon; so, to save her the long walk home, we took her to the manse to dinner.

'Several of the teachers have been telling me of the address that you gave on the evening of

the Sunday school anniversary,' she said, on our way to the manse. 'I wish you would let me see the manuscript.'

'I can do better than that,' I replied. 'The address was printed in yesterday's *Taieri Advocate*. I have several copies to spare if you care to have one.'

On arrival at the manse she insisted on going round the garden and admiring the flowers before composing herself on the sofa in the dining-room. I gave her the paper I had promised her, and hurried away to prepare for dinner. When I returned a few minutes later the paper was lying on the floor beside her, and she was crying as if her heart would break. By a supreme effort she regained her self-possession, promised to explain in the afternoon, and, in obedience to the summons, took her place at table.

During dinner I mentally reviewed the address which had so strangely reopened the fountains of her grief. It was the address which, under the title 'The Little Palace Beautiful,' appears in *The Golden Milestone*. It begins: 'There are only four children in the wide, wide world, and each of us is the parent of at least one of them.' The first of the four is *The Little Child that Never Was*. 'He is,' the address says, 'an exquisitely beautiful child. He is the child of all lonely men and lonely women, the child of their dreams and their fancies, the child that will never be born. He is the son

of the solitary.' And the address goes on to quote from Ada Cambridge's *Virgin Martyrs*:

Every wild she-bird has nest and mate in the warm April weather,
But a captive woman, made for love, no mate, no nest, has she.
In the spring of young desire, young men and maids are wed together,
And the happy mothers flaunt their bliss for all the world to see;
Nature's sacramental feast for them—an empty board for me.

Time, that heals so many sorrows, keeps mine ever freshly aching,
Though my face is growing furrowed and my brown hair turning white.
Still I mourn my irremediable loss, asleep or waking;
Still I hear my son's voice calling 'Mother' in the dead of night,
And am haunted by my girl's eyes that will never see the light.

As the address came back to me, I began to understand. I remembered what the gossips said about the mystery in Lexie's life. What was it, I wondered, that she meant to tell me after dinner?

IV

'You don't know me!' she cried passionately, when, once more, we found ourselves alone together. 'You treat me as if I were a good woman; you let me work at the church, and you bring me into your home; but you don't know me; really, really, you

don't! I have committed a great sin, a very great sin; and I am suffering for it; and others are suffering for it.' She paused, as if wondering how to begin her story, and then started afresh.

'I was brought up in the country,' she said, 'not far from Hokitui. My parents both died when I was a little girl; my guardians followed them a few years ago; so that now I am quite alone. At school I became very fond of Davie Bannerman, and he made no secret of his partiality for me. He used to bring me something—an apple or a cake or a picture or some sweets—every day. When I was nineteen we became engaged and were both very happy about it. Everybody in the Hokitui district loved Davie; he was handsome and good-natured; I used to think his laugh the grandest music I had ever heard. But I was proud, terribly proud. And, being proud, I was selfish. And, being selfish, I was jealous. Davie was good to everybody; yet I could not bear to see him paying attention to anybody but myself. He was a member of the Hokitui church, and used to spend a good deal of time there. I had no interest in such things in those days, and I was angry with him for neglecting me. But most of all was I jealous of Sadie McKay. Sadie was his cousin; she was one of the church girls; and I hated to think, when he was not with *me,* that he was with *her.* Davie always took my scoldings merrily, and quickly coaxed me into a better mind. And I dare say that all would have

gone well but for the accident that spoiled everything.

'Sadie was riding in from the farm one morning when, on the outskirts of Hokitui, she met a traction engine. Her horse bolted, and was soon out of control. As luck would have it, Davie was standing at a shop door near the township corner, and saw the horse galloping madly towards him. He rushed into the road and managed to check the animal before Sadie was thrown; but, in doing so, he was hurled to the ground, and the horse trod on his right arm, crushing it. He lay in the hospital for nearly two months; but I never went near him. When he left the hospital he wrote to me. It was a pitiful scrawl, written with his left hand; his right was amputated. "I have had a heavy loss," he said, "and I do not know how I can manage without my arm; but now I must suffer a still heavier loss, and I do not know how I can live without *you*. But it would not be right for me to burden you, and you must find somebody else, Lexie, who can care for you better than I can." I returned the engagement ring, and that was the end of it. If he had lost his arm in any other way I could have endured life-long poverty with him; but to have lost his arm for Sadie!' She paused and seemed to be looking out of the window, but I knew that her story was not finished.

'A few months later I took a situation in Ashburton. There I met, at a party, a young English-

man—Horace Latchford—who took a fancy to me. He was visiting New Zealand for the sake of his health. He told me that he owned a large estate in Devonshire, and would make me a perfect queen. During his stay—a period of about four months—life was one long frolic. Six months later he sent for me to go to him; and I went. But my eyes were soon opened. There was no estate in Devonshire; Horace was often intoxicated when he came to see me; and, instead of getting married, I returned to New Zealand in disgust. I came to Mosgiel, partly because I knew that I could get good work in the factory, and partly because I knew that nobody here would know me. Since I returned from England, ten years ago, I have only met one person who knew me in the old days at Hokitui. I was spending a holiday at Moeraki, and she was staying at the same boarding-house. I did not tell her that I had settled at Mosgiel; but she told me that none of the Bannermans were now living at Hokitui. Davie, she said, was the first to leave. He went to one of the cities to learn a profession that did not imperatively demand the use of two hands.' She paused again, and I waited.

'When I came to Mosgiel,' she went on, 'I got in the way of coming to the church. I became deeply impressed, and you received me into membership. And, every day since, as I have done little things, and taken little duties, in connection with the work, I have come to understand Davie as I

never understood him in the old days. I hated his fondness for the church. And, every day now, my sin seems to be more and more terrible. Just lately it has been with me night and day. And when I read your address my punishment seemed greater than I could bear. I have prayed thousands of times that the dreadful tangle might be unravelled. I have not prayed selfishly; I could be perfectly contented if only I knew that Davie is happy, and that his faith in God and womanhood has not been shaken by my wickedness. We sang *Lead, Kindly Light* in church this morning. Do you think that God really guides us? Does He put us right even when we have done wrong? Will He straighten things out? I would give anything to be quite sure! I seem to be in a maze, and can find no way out of it!'

V

It seemed an infinite relief to Lexie to have told me her story. She was much more often at the manse after that; a new bond seemed to have sprung up between us. I fancied that there came into Lexie's face a deeper peace and a greater content. The peace was, however, rudely broken. About two years after Lexie had unburdened her soul to me, I opened the paper one morning and confronted a startling announcement. The personal paragraphs contained the statement that *'Mr. David Bannerman, the brilliant Auckland solicitor, has been*

appointed Lecturer in Common Law at the Otago University.' There followed a brief outline of the new professor's career which left no shadow of doubt as to his identity. I particularly noticed that there was no reference to his marriage. What, if anything, was to be done? The Otago University was in Dunedin, only ten miles from Mosgiel. Ought I to allow these two people to drift on, perhaps for years, eating their hearts out within a few miles of each other? Was it not due to Davie that he should know that Lexie was at Mosgiel? He might desire to *seek* her; or he might desire to *avoid* her; in either case the information would be of value. I stated the position in this way to Lexie, but she would not hear of my taking any action. After a while, however, she agreed to my writing, telling the professor-elect that I knew of her whereabouts. I added that she was universally loved and honored for her fine work in the church and in the district. I enclosed a copy of 'The Little Palace Beautiful,' and mentioned the fact that I had once caught her weeping bitterly as she read it. It took four days for a mail from Mosgiel to reach Auckland. After a long talk with Lexie, I posted my letter on a Sunday evening. On Friday afternoon I received a reply-paid telegram: *'Wire lady's address immediately.'*

The new professor was married three months after entering upon the duties of his chair at the University; and, when I last saw her, Lexie was

enthroned in the center of a charming little circle. I received a letter from her yesterday—the letter that suggested this record. She tells me, with pardonable pride, that her eldest boy has matriculated and also joined the church.

'I am getting to be an old woman now,' she says, 'and I spend a lot of time in looking backward. Isn't it wonderful? It all came right after all! But for the accident, Davie would never have been a professor; and, if we had been married in the old days, I should only have been a drag and a hindrance. As it is, we have passed o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent; but the Kindly Light that I once doubted has led us all the way!'

III

THE PRETENDER

I

'Let's pretend!' cried Jean.

They were enjoying a romp after tea; but the game had been suddenly interrupted.

'How can we drown him when there's no water?' asked Ernest, looking wonderfully wise.

'Oh, let's pretend the lawn's the water!' replied Jean, brushing aside with impatience so trifling a difficulty.

Let's pretend! I used to wonder why Bonnie Prince Charlie was called the Pretender, as though he enjoyed some monopoly in that regard. We are all pretenders. Some, perhaps, are more skilful than others. Jean was especially clever. One day a lady called and gave her a beautiful bunch of flowers. Ernest was particularly fond of flowers, and thought that he could capture them by guile.

'I say, Jean,' he cried, 'let's have a game! We'll 'tend the flowers are mine!'

'All right,' Jean replied, with a sly twinkle, 'and you 'tend you've got 'em!'

Precisely! There is no end to the possibilities of pretending. It is the one game of which we never grow tired. We learn to play it as soon as we are

out of the cradle and it still fascinates us as we totter on the brink of the grave. Indeed, as H. C. Bunner shows, childhood and age often play the game together. Look at this!

It was an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy who was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go running and jumping,
And the boy no more could he,
For he was a pale little fellow,
With a thin, little twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight,
Out under the maple tree;
And the game that they played I'll tell you,
Just as it was told to me.

It was Hide-and-Seek they were playing,
Though you'd never have known it to be—
With an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend down his face, close his eyes, and guess where she was hiding. He was allowed three guesses. She was in the china-closet! Wrong! Well, she was in the chest in Papa's bedroom—the chest with the queer old key! Wrong again; but warmer! Well, then, she was in the clothes-press! It was his third guess, and it was right. In the clothes-press she was! It was his turn to hide and Granny's turn to guess!

Then she covered her face with her fingers,
Which were wrinkled and white and wee;
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a one and a two and a three.

And they never had stirred from their places
Right under the maple tree,
This old, old, old, old lady
And the boy with the lame little knee.
This dear, dear, dear, old lady
And the boy who was half-past three.

It is the oldest game in the world; it was played—just as it is played to-day—before any other game was dreamed of, and the children of to-morrow will be playing it when the games of to-day are all forgotten. It is the most universal game in the world; it is played in Pekin just as it is played in London; it is played in Mysore just as it is played in New York; it is played in Timbuctoo just as we play it here in Melbourne. The rules of the game never alter with the period or change with the place. It is equally popular in all grades of society. The royal children play it in the palace-grounds and the street urchins play it in the alleys and the slums. For the beauty of it is, that it needs no paraphernalia or tackle or gear; you have not to buy a bat or a ball, a racket or a net; you do not require special grounds or courts or links. The 'old, old, old, old lady,' and 'the boy with the twisted knee' take it into their heads to have a game; and, then and there, without moving an inch or getting a

thing, they set to work and play it! Jean cries, 'Let's pretend!' and straightway everybody is pretending!

'Let's pretend!' cried Jean. There was nothing original in the suggestion. If the words are not actually a quotation from Shakespeare, it is perfectly certain that Shakespeare uttered them. They voice the very spirit of the drama. The play and the pantomime are all a matter of pretending. It happened last evening that I had an appointment in the city. I had promised to meet a friend on the Town Hall steps at half-past seven. I was early; it was a delicious summer's evening, and I enjoyed watching the crowd. The crowd is always worth watching, but at that hour the crowd is at its best. The strain of the day is over and the weariness of night has not yet come. The crowd is fresh, vivacious, light-hearted. As I stood upon the steps, I saw young men and maidens keeping their trysts with each other; they were making no effort to conceal their joy in each other's society; as they tripped off together, they were laughingly anticipating the entertainment to which they were hastening. Gentlemen in evening dress, accompanied by handsome women, beautifully gowned, swept by in sumptuous cars that were brightly lit and daintily adorned with choicest flowers. Here and there, in this unbroken tide of traffic, I caught a glimpse of features more quaint and of garments more fantastic. I saw a troubadour, a viking, a knight-

errant, a pierrot and a Spanish cavalier. I saw a gipsy queen, a geisha-girl, a milkmaid, an Egyptian princess, and a lady of the court of Louis the Fourteenth. They were on their way to a fancy dress ball at Government House. I stood entranced as this pageant of pleasure swept past me, and a strange thought seized my fancy. I reminded myself that, in any one of ten thousand cities, I might witness, at this same hour, an identically similar spectacle. If I could have taken my stand in the Strand in London, or in Princes Street, Edinburgh, or in Sackville Street, Dublin, or in Broadway, New York, or in the main thoroughfare of any city in Christendom, I should have gazed upon a scene which would have seemed like a mere reflection of this one. And then I asked myself for an interpretation of it all. What did it all mean—this throng of happy pedestrians laughing and chatting as they surged along the pavements; this ceaseless procession of gay vehicles in the brilliantly-illumined roadway?

II

It is a tribute to our human passion for pretending. His Excellency stands in the reception hall at Government House and laughingly welcomes his guests. They are pretenders, every one. The troubadour is no troubadour; the viking, no viking; the gipsy, no gipsy; and the milkmaid, no milkmaid. They are just pretending and they have gone to all

this trouble and to all this expense that the full-orbed joy of pretending may be for one crowded hour their own. And the other people—the gentlemen in evening dress; the ladies richly begowned and bejewelled; the surging crowd upon the path. They are making their way to the theatres. They are going to see the great actors and actresses pretend. One actor will pretend to be a cripple and another will pretend to be a king; one actress will pretend to be an empress and one will pretend to be a slave; and the better the actors and the actresses pretend the better these people will like it.

For the people love pretending; that is how the theatre came to be. Like Topsy, it had no father and no mother. It sprang from our insatiable fondness for make-believe. In his *Short History of the English People* John Richard Green says that 'it was the people itself that created the stage'; and he graphically describes their initial ventures. 'The theatre,' he says, 'was the courtyard of an inn or a mere booth such as is still seen at a country fair; the bulk of the audience sat beneath the open sky; a few covered seats accommodated the wealthier spectators while patrons and nobles sprawled upon the actual boards.' In those days the audience had to do its part of the pretending. If the spectators saw a few flowers they accepted the hint and imagined that the play was being enacted in a beautiful garden. In a battle scene the arrival of

an army was represented by a stampede across the stage of a dozen clumsy sceneshifters brandishing swords and bucklers. In order to assist the audience to muster appropriate emotions, the stage was draped with black when a tragedy was about to be presented and with blue when the performance was to portray life in some lighter vein. What is this but a group of children playing at charades, at dressing-up, at 'just pretending?' Children pretend in order that they may escape from the limitations of reality into the infinitudes of romance. Once they begin to pretend all life is open to them. They have uttered the magic 'Sesame' and every gate unbars. Their seniors invade the same realm for the same reason. This is the significance of those crowded streets last night.

III

Now this brings me to a very interesting point. Is it wrong to pretend? In the greatest sermon ever preached—the Sermon on the Mount—Jesus called certain people hypocrites. But, did He, by doing so, condemn all forms of hypocrisy? If so, the people upon whom I looked last night were all of them earning for themselves His malediction. And so were the people gathered in the quaint old English courtyard. And so was Jean when she called to her playmates: 'Let's pretend!' And so was 'the old, old, old, old lady' and 'the boy with the twisted knee.' For a hypocrite—as the

very word suggests—is simply a pretender. A hypocrite is one who colors his face, or dresses up or acts a part. Does it follow, therefore, because Jesus condemned the Pharisees and called them hypocrites, that all pretenders fall beneath His frown? To ask the question is to answer it. Fancy Jesus frowning at Jean! Fancy Jesus frowning at 'the old, old, old, old lady' and 'the boy with the twisted knee!' Why Jesus Himself *pretended* on occasions. He behaved towards the Syro-Phœnician woman as though He had no sympathy with her in her distress. He saw the disciples in trouble on the lake; and, walking on the water, He made as though He would have passed them by. When, after journeying with two of His disciples to Emmaus, He reached the door of their home, He made as though He would have gone further! 'He made as though!' 'He made as though!' 'He made as though!' The feints of Deity!

Let a man but keep his eyes wide open and he will see some very lovable hypocrites, some very amiable pretenders, in the course of a day's march. I have been reading *The Butterfly Man.* And here in the early part of the book is a scene in which a child and a criminal take part. Mary Virginia shows John Flint a pasteboard box. It contains a dark-colored and rather ugly grey moth with his wings turned down.

'You wouldn't think him pretty, would you?' asked the child.

'No,' replied John Flint disappointedly, 'I shouldn't!'

Mary Virginia smiled, and, picking up the little moth, held his body, very gently, between her finger tips. He fluttered, spreading out his grey wings; and then John saw the beautiful pansy-like underwings, and the glorious lower pair of scarlet velvet, barred and bordered with black.

'I got to thinking,' said the girl, thoughtfully, lifting her clear and candid eyes to John Flint's, 'I got to thinking, when he threw aside his plain grey cloak and showed me his lovely underwings, that he's like some people. You couldn't be expected to know what was underneath, could you? So you pass them by, thinking how ordinary and uninteresting and ugly they are, and you feel rather sorry for them—because you don't know. But if you once get close enough to touch them—why, then you find out! You only think of the dust-colored outside, and all the while the underwings are right there, waiting for you to find them! Isn't it wonderful and beautiful? And the best of it all is, it's true!'

In these artless sentences, tripping, so easily from a child's tongue, Marie Oemler sums up the burden of her book. The incident is a parable. For John Flint was *himself* the drab and ugly moth. In the opening chapters of the story, he is a horrible object —course, brutal, loathsome, revolting. But there were underwings. And gradually, beneath the

touch of gentle influences, those underwings became visible; and, in the later stages of the story, all men admired and revered and loved the beautiful nobleness of the Butterfly Man.

IV

There are people, I suppose, who trick themselves out to make themselves appear much prettier or much nicer or—worse still—much holier than they really are. 'Let's pretend!' they cry; and there is something sinister in their pretending. It is against these people—and against them only—that the anathemas of the Sermon on the Mount are directed.

Again, there are people who, like Ian Maclaren's Drumtochty folk, go through life dreading lest their underwings should be seen, their virtues exposed, their goodness discovered. They bear themselves distantly and give an impression of aloofness; you would never dream, unless you got to know them, that their dispositions were so sweet, their characters so strong, their souls so saintly.

I am told that a great actor achieves his triumphs through contemplating so closely the character that he impersonates. His own individuality becomes, for the time being, absorbed in another. Henry Irving forgets that he is Henry Irving and believes himself to be Macbeth. I have read of One who, seeming to possess no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty that men should desire Him, was neverthe-

less the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. It may be that these amiable pretenders of whom we are all so fond have contemplated so closely *His* character that they have unconsciously caught His spirit and acquired His ways. They cleverly conceal the rainbow-tinted underwings, beneath a coat of drab; but, having once caught a glimpse of their glory, we ever after feel it shining through the grey.

IV

ACHMED'S INVESTMENT

I

GILT-EDGED securities are all very well; but men do not make their fortunes out of gilt-edged securities. Gilt-edged securities may suit those whose circumstances compel them to husband jealously their meagre savings; but the big dividends are made out of the risky speculations. There are investments in which a man cannot, by any possibility, lose his treasure, and in which he must, with mathematical certainty, reap a modest margin of profit. And, on the other hand, there are investments in which a man may, quite easily, lose every penny that he hazards, but in which he may, quite conceivably, make a perfectly golden haul. An Eastern sage with a well-established reputation for wisdom urges us to venture fearlessly at times upon these more perilous but more profitable ventures, *'Cast thy bread,'* he says, *'upon the waters.'* The man who believes in gilt-edged securities will prefer to cast it upon *the land.* The land is a fixture. The land does not float away or fly away or fade away. You find it where you left it. It is stable, substantial, secure. Because of its fixity, men trust it. For thousands of years it was the bank of the nations. Men hid

their treasures in fields, as many a lucky finder afterwards discovered to his delight. But the waters! *Cast thy bread upon the waters!* The waters are the very emblem of all that is fickle, variable and inconstant. They ebb and they flow; they rise and they fall; they are restless, unstable, fluctuating. They suck down into their dark depths the treasures confided to their care and leave no trace upon the surface of the hiding-place in which the booty lies concealed. The waters! *Cast thy bread upon the waters!* The man who believes only in gilt-edged securities shakes his head. This is no investment for him. But the man who can afford to take desperate hazards pricks up his ears.

'The waters!' he exclaims. 'He tells me to cast my bread upon the waters! It is the last place in the world to which I should have thought of casting it! But I shall venture!'

And he becomes immensely rich in consequence.

II

Achmed Ali is a young Egyptian farmer. His lands are in the Nile Valley, and, in the flood-time, two thirds of his property is under water. But flood-time is also sowing-time, and what is he to do? He can, of course, sow that portion of his land that stands above the waterline. And he does. This is his gilt-edged security. He is practically certain of getting back in the late summer the grain that he sows in the spring, with a fair proportion of

increase in addition. But on that narrow margin of profit Achmed Ali cannot support wife and children and pay all the expenses of his farm. He turns wistfully towards the river. He surveys the section of his farm over which the waters are sluggishly drifting. Sometimes they recede, leaving a broad strip of shining, gurgling mud. He is tempted to scatter his seed over that belt of ooze at once. He waits a few hours, however, hoping that the retreat of the waters will continue, and that, in a few days, he will be able to carry his seed-basket over the whole area that is now submerged. But his hopes are soon shattered. The swaying waters come welling in again and even lick the edges of the land he has already sown. If only he could get at those inundated fields! The land is soft and moist! It has been enriched and fertilized by the action of the flood-waters. Saturated by the moisture in the soil, and warmed by the rays of the tropical sun, the seed would germinate and spring up as if by magic; and the harvest would beggar that of the land that the river has never touched! But these are castles in the air. The flood is there. It shows no sign of withdrawing. He knows that, after it has gone, it will be a day or two before he can cross the soft, sticky, slimy soil with his basket. And by that time the season may have passed. It will be too late to sow.

It is to Achmed Ali that our Eastern sage is speaking. 'Why wait for the flood?' he asks. *'Cast*

thy bread upon the waters! Much good grain—grain that thou canst ill afford to lose—will float away and never more be seen. Much of it will be greedily devoured by fish and water-fowl. But what of that? Much of it will drift about on the shallow waters, and be deposited, as they recede, on the soft warm mud from which they ebb. With thy heavy feet and clumsy form and weighty basket thou couldst not cross the soil till long after the waters leave it. Let the waters do their work for thee! Turn thy foe into a friend! Make of the tyrant a slave! *Cast thy bread upon the waters!'*

It is no gilt-edged security; but Achmed Ali resolves to take the risk.

Among the reeds round the bend of the river his flat-bottomed boat is moored. He hurries up to the barn for his basket of seed. He gazes almost fondly, upon the precious grain that he is about to invest in such a precarious speculation. He bears it down to the boat and pushes out on to the shallow waters. A tall ibis, stalking with stately stride along the edge of the stream, is startled by the commotion and flies away, flapping its wings with slow and measured beat. Achmed is now well out upon the river. The flood that had defied him now supports him. He feels as the Philistines must have felt when they harnessed Samson to their mill. He paddles up to one end of his property and works his way down to the other, scattering the seed broadcast as he goes. Then, having disposed of every

grain, he paddles back to his starting-point and ties up his boat. He stands for a moment on the bank watching the seed floating hither and thither upon the eddying waters. In some places it is still strewn evenly upon the tide; in others it has drifted into snakelike formations that curl and straighten themselves out again on the surface of the flood. It seems an awful waste. But is it?

In a day or two the waters recede, leaving the saturated seed strewn over the oozy soil. It sinks in of its own weight and is quickly lost to view. And then Achmed sees the wisdom of the counsel he has followed. And in the summer, when he garners a rich harvest from the very lands over which his boat had drifted, he blesses that Eastern sage for those wise words.

III

In my old Mosgiel days, I was often invited to address evening meetings in Dunedin. The trouble lay in the return. A train left Dunedin at twenty past nine and there was no other until twenty past ten, or, on some nights, twenty past eleven. It was sometimes difficult to leave a meeting in time to catch the first of these trains, yet, if I stayed for a later one, it meant a midnight arrival at the manse and a woeful sense of weariness next morning. On the particular night of which I am now thinking, I missed the early train. There was no other until twenty past eleven. I sat on the railway platform,

feeling very sorry for myself. When at length the train started, I found myself sharing with one companion a long compartment, with doors at either extremity and seats along the sides, capable of accommodating fifty people. He sat at one end and I at the other. I expect that I looked to him as woebegone and disconsolate as he looked to me. The train rumbled on through the night. The light was too dim to permit of reading; the jolting was too great to permit of sleeping; and I was just about to record a solemn vow never to speak in town again when a curious line of thought captivated me. I could not read; I could not sleep; but I could talk! And here, in the far corner of the compartment, was another belated unfortunate who could neither read nor sleep and who might like to beguile the time with conversation! And then it occurred to me not only that I *could* do it but that I *should* do it. We had been thrown together for an hour in this strange way at dead of night; we should probably never meet again until the Day of Judgement; what right had I to let him go as though our tracks had never crossed at all? Was the great message that, on Sundays, I delivered to my Mosgiel people, intended exclusively for them, and was it only to be delivered on Sundays? I felt that my Sunday congregation was a gilt-edged security; but here was a chance for a rash speculation!

The train stopped at Burnside. I stepped out on to the station and walked up and down for a moment

inhaling the fresh mountain air. I wanted to have all my wits about me and to be at my best. The engine whistled, and, on returning to the compartment, I was careful to re-enter it by the door near which my companion was sitting, and I took the seat immediately opposite to him. I then saw that he was quite a young fellow, probably a farmer's son. We soon struck up a pleasant conversation, and then, having created an atmosphere, I expressed the hope that we were fellow-travellers on life's greater journey.

'It's strange that you should ask me that,' he said, 'I've been thinking a lot about such things lately.'

We became so engrossed in our conversation that the train had been standing a minute or so at Mosgiel before we realized that we had reached the end of our journey. I found that our ways took us in diametrically opposite directions. He had a long walk ahead of him.

'Well,' I said, in taking farewell of him, 'you may see your way to a decision as you walk along the road. If so, remember that you need no one to help you. Lift up your heart to the Saviour; He will understand!'

We parted with a warm handclasp. Long before I reached the manse I was biting my lips at having omitted to take his name and address. However, like Achmed Ali, I had cast my bread upon the waters.

Five years passed. One Monday morning I

was seated in the train for Dunedin. The compartment was nearly full. Between Abbotsford and Burnside the door at one end of the carriage opened, and a tall, dark man came through, handing each passenger a neat little pamphlet. He gave me a copy of *Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment.* I looked up to thank him, and, as our eyes met, he recognized me.

'Why,' he exclaimed, 'you're the very man!'

I made room for him to sit beside me. I told him that his face seemed familiar, although I could not remember where we had met before.

'Why,' he said, 'don't you remember that night in the train? You told me, if I saw my way to a decision, to lift up my heart to the Saviour on the road. And I did. I've felt sorry ever since that I didn't ask who you were, so that I could come and tell you. But, as the light came to me in a railway train, I have always tried to do as much good as possible when I have had occasion to travel. I can't *speak* to people as you spoke to me; but I always bring a packet of booklets with me.'

I recalled the inward struggle that preceded my approach that night. I remembered bracing myself on the Burnside station for the ordeal. It seemed at the time a very rash and risky speculation.

But here was my harvest! I have invested most of my time and energy in gilt-edged securities, and, on the whole, I have no reason to be dissatisfied with the return that they have yielded me. But I have

seldom obtained from my gilt-edged securities so handsome a profit as that unpromising venture ultimately brought to me.

IV

The only way to keep a thing is to throw it away. The only way to hold your money is to invest it. The only way to ensure remembering a poem is to keep repeating it to others. If you hear a good story and attempt to keep it for your own delectation, you will forget it in a week. Laugh over it with every man you meet and it will ripple in your soul for years.

It sometimes happens, when I have finished one of these screeds of mine, that I feel a fatherly solicitude concerning it. You sometimes grow fond of a thing, not because you cherish an inflated conception of its value, but because through sheer familiarity, it has become a part of you. So I look at these white sheets over which I have been bending for days and into which I have poured all my soul. I feel anxious about them. Yet it is absurd to keep them. If I store them away I shall soon forget their contents and my labor will all be lost. But the printer is six hundred miles away. I think of all the hands through which they must pass on their way from me to him. I register them at the Post Office, but still I think of all the risks. These white sheets of mine are such frail and flimsy things; an accident, a fire, and where then would

they be? But one happy morning I see my screed in print! I feel that I have it at last! It is beyond the reach of fire or accident. If *this* house is burned down, I can obtain a copy in *that* one! I feel that nothing now can rob me of the child I brought into being. It is scattered broadcast, and, having been scattered broadcast, is at last my very, very own!

The only way to keep a thing is to throw it away. Achmed Ali knows that. He looks fondly at the grain in the basket but he knows that he cannot keep it in the barn. 'Seeds which mildew in the garner, scattered, fill with gold the plain.' And so he casts some of it on the land—his gilt-edged security—and gets it back with interest; and he casts the rest upon the water—his risky speculation—and gets it back many times multiplied.

V

SATURDAY

SATURDAY is the name, not so much of a day, as of a specific phase of human experience. And it is a great phase. We all catch ourselves at odd moments living over again some of the unforgettable Saturdays of long ago. In actual fact, a man may be lounging in an armchair beside his winter fire or sprawling on the lawn on a drowsy summer afternoon. But, under such conditions, the actual fact is soon relegated to oblivion. A far-away look comes into his eyes, a wayward smile flits over his face, and, giving rein to his fancy, he sees landscapes on which his gaze has not rested for many a long year. He roams at will among the golden Saturdays of auld lang syne. He feels afresh the mighty thrill that swept his soul when, after a long heroic struggle, his side won that famous match upon a certain village green; he lives again through the fierce excitement of a paper-chase that led the hare and hounds over the great green hills and down through the dark pine forest in the valley; he enjoys once more the birds'-nesting expedition in the winding lane; and he sees, as vividly as he saw them at the time, the shining trophies that rewarded his fishing excursions to the millponds and trout-

streams of the outlying countryside. In those far-off days, Saturday was the wild romance of the week.

I remember being told by my first schoolmaster that Saturday was named after Saturn, and that Saturn was the planet that had rings all round it. From that hour, by a singular confusion of ideas, I always thought of Saturday as the day that had the rings round it. I somehow associated the day with the lady of the nursery rhyme who has rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, and who, therefore, has music wherever she goes. I liked to think that Saturday moved among the other days of the week in such melodious pomp and splendor. The notion intensified the zest with which I welcomed the great day. For Saturday was great; it was great in its coming and great in its going. It began gloriously and it ended gloriously. I do not mean that it ended as it began. By no means. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon. The glory of Saturday's dawn was one glory; the glory of Saturday's dusk was another glory. Saturday began like a Red Indian shouting his war-whoop as he takes to the trail; it ended like a monk who, in the stillness of his cloister, chants his evening hymn.

It takes a boy a minute or two, on waking, to assure himself that it is really Saturday. He is not quite sure of himself; the notion seems too good to be true. He sits bolt upright; rubs his eyes; and stares about him for some confirmation of the

joyous suspicion that is bringing the blood to his cheeks in excitement. Is it really Saturday? He distrusts—and not without cause—the confused sensations of those waking moments. He made a mistake once before; he fancied that it was Saturday; made all his plans accordingly; and discovered to his disgust a few minutes later that it was only Friday after all. That Friday, at any rate, was a most unlucky day! But Saturday! With what tingling exhilaration and boisterous delight the conviction that it was Saturday fastened upon us! Saturday was our day! We raced out after breakfast like so many colts turned loose upon the heath. We tossed up our caps for the sheer joy of it. Whatever the ordeals of the week had been, we forgave all our tyrants and tormentors on Saturday morning. And in that gracious and benignant absolution we experienced a foretaste of the saintliness with which the great day wore to its close.

For Saturday, however spent, reached its climax in a consciousness of virtue so complete and so serene and so beatific as to be almost unearthly. Such a delicious content seldom falls within the experience of mortals. Saturday night was bath-night; and few sensations in life are more delectable than the angelic self-satisfaction that overtakes the average boy after having been subjected to the magic discipline of hot water and clean sheets. The outward change is wonderful; but the inward transformation exceeds it by far. He feels good; looks

'good; smells good; *is* good. A boy after a bath is at peace with all the world. The week may have gone hardly with him. Parents and teachers may have shown a vexatious incapacity to see things from a boy's standpoint; the proprietors of orchards and gardens may have exhibited—perhaps even on Saturday afternoon—a singular inflexibility in their interpretation of the laws relating to property; the world as a whole may have behaved in a manner wofully inconsiderate and unjust. But on Saturday night, under the softening influence of a hot bath and a clean bed, a boy finds it in his heart to forgive everything and everybody. A vast charity wells up in his soul. As he lays his damp head on his snowy pillow, he revokes all his harsh judgements and cancels all his stern resolves. He will not run away from home after all! Instead of abandoning his unfeeling seniors to their hatred, malice and uncharitableness, he will treat them with magnanimity and tolerance; he will give them another chance. It is possible—appearances to the contrary notwithstanding—that they do not mean to be unsympathetic. They simply do not understand. Thinking thus the young saint falls asleep in the odor of sanctity—and soap! The more wayward and troublesome he has been in the daytime, the more angelic will he appear under these new conditions. Watching him as he slumbers, one of the Saturnian rings seems to encompass his brow like a halo. Saturday has come to an end!

Now, this saintly young savage of ours will learn, as the years go by, that life itself has its Saturday phase. Dr. Chalmers used to say that our allotted span of three score years and ten divides itself into seven decades corresponding with the seven days of the week. The seventh—the stretch of life that opens out before a man on his *sixtieth* birthday—is, the doctor used to say, a Sabbatic period. In it, he should shake himself free, as far as possible, from the toil and moil of life, and give himself to the cultivation of a quiet and restful spirit. That being so, it follows that the sixth period—the period that opens out before a man on his *fiftieth* birthday—is the Saturday of life. It is a great time, every way. Like the Saturday of the old days, and like the Saturday of riper years, it has characteristics peculiarly its own. On his fiftieth birthday, if Mr. J. W. Robertson Scott is to be believed, a man enters the gates of a new world. It is not of necessity a better world or a worse one; it is simply a different one. We seldom enter upon a new experience without finding that the change has involved us in a few drawbacks and deprivations, as well as in some distinct benefits and advantages. The step that a man takes on his fiftieth birthday is no exception to this rule. Mr. Robertson Scott caught sight of the gates of the new era some time before he actually reached them. 'In the tram, one evening, about six months ago, a schoolboy rose and offered me his seat,' he tells us. The incident startled him.

A man who is still in the forties does not expect to receive such courtesies. He consoled himself, however, with the assumption that the attentive schoolboy was probably a boy scout who had suddenly realized that the day was closing in without his having done the good deed prescribed for each twenty-four hours of the life of the perfect Baden-Powellite. Four months later, however, the same thing happened again; and then, shortly after, came the fiftieth birthday! Clearly it was Saturday morning!

Now, the striking thing about Mr. Robertson Scott's experience is the fact that his attainment of his jubilee appealed to him, not as an end, but as a beginning. It was not so much a premonition of senility and decay as the entrance upon a fresh phase of life. When Horace Walpole wrote to Thomas Gray in 1766, urging him to write more poetry, Gray replied that when a man has turned fifty—as he had just done—there is nothing for it but to think of finishing. He voiced the feeling of the period. In the eighteenth century, a man of fifty was classified among the veterans. A hundred years later, a very different conviction held the field. Tolstoy tells us that his fiftieth year was the year of his greatest awakening and enlightenment; and, in *The Poet at the Breakfast Table,* Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes makes the old master witness to something of a similar kind. His friends are anxious to know how and when he ac-

quired his wealth of wisdom; and he is able to reply with remarkable precision: 'It was on the morning of my fiftieth birthday that the solution of life's great problem came to me. It took me just fifty years to find my place in the Eternal Order of Things.' Such testimonies go a long way towards vindicating Mr. Robertson Scott's assumption that the fiftieth birthday marks rather a new beginning than a sad, regretful close. The fiftieth birthday is Saturday morning; and who, on Saturday morning, feels that the week is over?

On the contrary, Saturday morning is, to most people, more insistent than any other morning in its demands upon their energies. Walk up the street on a Saturday afternoon, and you will see your neighbors garbed and employed as they are never garbed or employed on any other day. On Saturday we weed the garden, mow the lawn and effect the week's repairs. On Saturday we attend to a multitude of minor matters for which we have had no time during the week. On Saturday we clear up. And on Saturday night we are tired. It by no means follows, therefore, that, because a man's fiftieth birthday is his Saturday morning, his week's work is done. It is indisputable, of course, that a man of fifty has left the greater part of life behind him; he may be pardoned if he pauses at times to take long and wistful glances along the road that he has trodden; it will not be considered strange if, on very slight provocation, he drops into

a rapture of reminiscence. There is a subtle stage in the development of fruit at which, having attained its full size, it ripens rapidly. A man enters upon that stage on his fiftieth birthday. A shrewd observer has said that, like peaches and pears, we grow sweet for awhile before we begin to decay. The Saturday of life is sweetening time. We become less harsh in our criticisms, less overbearing in our opinions, more considerate towards our contemporaries and more sympathetic towards our juniors. The week's work is by no means finished. Much remains to be done. But it will be done in a new spirit—a Saturday spirit. And if the man of fifty be spared to enjoy octogenarian honors, he will smile as he recalls the immaturity and unripeness of life's first five decades. It is a poor week that has no Saturday and no Sunday in it. To have finished at fifty, an old man will tell you, would have meant missing the best.

It has often struck me as an impressive coincidence that it was when Dr. Johnson was approaching his fiftieth birthday—life's Saturday morning—that he discovered a significance in Saturday that, until then, had eluded him. He felt, as we all feel on Saturdays, that the time had come to clear up, to put things in their places and to overtake neglected tasks. And this is the entry he makes in his Journal:

'Having lived, not without an habitual reverence for the Sabbath, yet without that attention to its

religious duties which Christianity requires: I resolve henceforth—*First,* to rise early on Sabbath morning, and, in order to that, to go to sleep early on Saturday night. *Second,* to use some more than ordinary devotion as soon as I rise. *Third,* to examine into the tenor of my life, and particularly the last week, and to mark my advances in religion, or my recessions from it. *Fourth,* to read the Scriptures methodically, with such helps as are at hand. *Fifth,* to go to church twice. *Sixth,* to read books of divinity, either speculative or practical. *Seventh,* to instruct my family. *Eighth,* to wear off by meditation any worldly soil contracted in the week.'

The significance of this heroic record lies in the resolve that Saturday, so far from unfitting him for Sunday, shall lead up to it as a stately avenue leads up to a noble entrance-hall. 'I resolve to go to sleep early on Saturday night.' Exactly a hundred years after the great doctor had inscribed this famous entry on the pages of his Journal, Charlotte Elliott wrote her well-known hymn in praise of Saturday:

Before the Majesty of heaven
To-morrow we appear;
No honor half so great is given
Throughout man's sojourn here.

The altar must be cleansed to-day,
Meet for the offered lamb;
The wood in order we must lay,
And wait to-morrow's flame.

I have heard scores of sermons on *The Proper Observance of Sunday;* and, somehow, I have never been impressed by their utility. One of these days some pulpit genius will preach on *The Proper Observance of Saturday,* and then, quite conceivably, the new day will dawn.

As I lay down my pen, a pair of experiences rush back upon my mind. The one befell me at sea, the other on land.

1. In the course of a voyage from New Zealand to England it became necessary—in order to harmonize the clocks and calendars on board with the clocks and calendars ashore—to take in an extra day. We awoke one morning and it was Saturday; we awoke next morning and it was Saturday again! That second Saturday was the strangest day that I have ever spent. I never realized the extent to which Saturday leads up to Sunday as I realized it that day.

2. I once numbered among my intimate friends a Jewish rabbi. I found his society extremely delightful and wonderfully instructive. He often took me to his synagogue, showed me its treasures, and initiated me into its mysteries. It was all very beautiful and very suggestive. But I invariably came away feeling dissatisfied and disappointed. I had been gazing upon the emblems and symbols of a Saturday faith. Like that weird Saturday on board the *Tongariro,* it was a Saturday that led to

a Saturday, a Saturday that ushered in nothing holier or sweeter than itself.

Saturn with all his rings is grand; but the Sun is grander still! It is from the Sun that Saturn derives his brightness and his glory. Ask Saturn the secret of his splendor, and it is to the Sun that he unhesitatingly points. As it is with these mighty orbs themselves, so is it with the days that bear their names. As Samuel Johnson and Charlotte Elliott knew so well, it is the glory of Saturday to prepare the way for Sunday. Saturday belongs to the Order of St. John the Baptist. John was the greatest of all the sons of men, yet it was his mission to clear the path for the coming of a greater. The old world's Saturday-Sabbath, commemorating a completed Creation, led up to the new world's Sunday-Sabbath, commemorating a completed Redemption. The oracles and mysteries that I saw in the synagogue, the emblems and expressions of a Saturday faith, were sublime. But their sublimity lay in the fact that they pointed men to, and prepared men for, a Sunday faith, a faith that gathers about a wondrous Cross and an empty tomb, a faith from which that Saturday faith, like Saturn bathed in sunlight, derives alike its lustre and its fame.

VI

THE CHIMES

It was Christmas Eve—an Australian Christmas Eve. To an Englishman it must always seem a weird, uncanny hotch-potch. He never grows accustomed to the scorching Christmases that come to him beneath the Southern Cross. Southey once declared that, however long a man lives, the first twenty years of his life will always represent the biggest half of it. That is indisputably so. The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. The first twenty years of life fasten upon our hearts sentiments and traditions that will dominate all our days. I spent my first twenty Christmases in the old land. I have spent far more than twenty in the new. Yet, whenever I find old Father Christmas wiping the perspiration from his brow as he wanders among the roses and strawberries of our fierce Australian mid-summer, I feel secretly sorry for him. He looks as jolly as ever, yet he gives you the impression of having lost his way. He seems to be casting about him for snowflakes and icicles.

But, as I was saying, it was Christmas Eve—an Australian Christmas Eve. The day had been sultry and trying. After tea I sauntered off across

the fields to a spot among the fir-trees, at which I can always rely upon meeting a few grey squirrels, an old brown 'possum, and some other friends of mine. I had scarcely taken my seat on a grassy knoll, overlooking a belt of bush, when the laughing-jackasses broke into a wild, unearthly chorus in the wooded valley below. And then, a few minutes later, the cool evening air was flooded with a torrent of harmony that transported me across the years and across the seas. The squirrels, the 'possum, and the kookaburras were left leagues and leagues behind. From a lofty steeple that crowned a distant crest there floated over hill and hollow the pealing and the chiming of the bells.

The magic that slept in the lute of the Pied Piper was as nothing compared with the magic of the bells. Beneath the witchery of their music, time and space shrivel into nothingness and are no more. We are wafted to old familiar places; we see the old familiar faces; we enter into fellowship with lands far off and ages long departed. Frank Bullen heard our Australian bells. He was only a sailor-boy at the time. 'Often,' he says, 'I would stand on deck when my ship was anchored in Sydney Harbor on Sunday morning, and listen to the church bells playing "Sicilian Mariners" with a dull ache at my heart, a deep longing for something, I knew not what.' The bells, according to their wont, were annihilating time and space. Beneath the enchantment of their minstrelsy he sped, as on angels'

wings, away from the realities of his rough and roving sea-life, into the quiet haven of a tender past. He was back in his old seat in a little chapel in Harrow Road. Every Englishman overseas will understand.

The bells throw bridges across the yawning chasms of space, and link up hearts that stand severed by the tyrannies of time. In his *Golden Legend,* Longfellow describes Prince Henry and Elsie standing in the twilight on the terrace of the old castle of Vautsberg on the Rhine. Suddenly they catch the strains of distant bells. Elsie asks what bells they are. The Prince replies:

> They are the bells of Geisenheim,
> That, with their melancholy chime,
> Ring out the curfew of the sun.

And then he adds:

> Dear Elsie, many years ago
> Those same soft bells at eventide
> Rang in the ears of Charlemagne,
> As, seated at Fastrada's side,
> At Ingelheim, in all his pride,
> He heard their sound with secret pain.

And so, through the melodious medium of the bells, the royal lovers on the terrace cross the long centuries that intervene and enter into fellowship with those other royal lovers of an earlier time.

I remember, many years ago, spending a few days at a beautiful country home in Hampshire. My

hostess was a little old lady—*very* little and *very* old. I can see her now with her prim little cap, her golden earrings, and her silver ringlets. It was summer-time, and one evening she invited me to accompany her on a walk across the deer-park. She was a happy little body, and that evening she was specially vivacious. Her conversation was punctuated with pretty ripples of silvery laughter. She was too proud to confess to feeling tired; but when we reached a stile with a step to it on the brow of a hill, she took a seat upon the step—to drink in, as she was careful to explain, the beauty of the view. I perched myself upon the stile itself and watched with interest the antics of a fine stag among some oak-trees not far away. Then, all at once, the bells from the village behind us rang out blithely. For a while I listened in silence, and then turned to my companion to ask a question. On glancing down at her face, however, I was astonished to notice tears upon her cheek. What could be the matter with my gay little friend? I immediately transferred my attention to the stag, who was by this time ambling away across the park, but she knew that I had seen the tear-drops. On our way back to the house she explained.

'My mother died,' she said, 'while I was on my honeymoon in Italy. I was only a girl, and she was not much more. She was only twenty when I was born, and I was only eighteen on my wedding day. I never dreamed, when I left England, that I should

never see her again. On the eve of my wedding she came up to me, put her arm round me, and led me away to spend one more hour alone with her. We sauntered off to the stile on which you and I rested this evening; and as we sat there, hand in hand, the bells pealed out just as they did to-night. And, as I listened to them just now, her face, her form, her voice, her words—the very *feeling* of that other evening more than sixty years ago—came back upon me more vividly than they have ever done before. I could almost fancy that I was a girl again. My marriage, my children, my travels, and my long widowhood seemed all a dream. It was the bells that took me back again!'

I wonder if it was! I wonder if the great iron bells that hung in the dusty old belfry of that English hamlet knew anything of the sweet and sacred secrets that my little old friend kept locked up in that gentle heart of hers! I wonder if the bells of Geisenheim knew anything of the loves of Charlemagne and Fastrada, of Elsie and Prince Henry! I wonder if the bells that drove the squirrels from my mind that summer evening knew anything of the Christmas thoughts and Christmas memories with which they flooded my soul! I wonder!

And, in my wonderment, I find myself in excellent company. For here is little Paul Dombey! He has only a few days to live, although, to-day, he is slightly better and able to get about the house a

little. And, in moving about the house, he finds a workman mending the great clock in the hall, and Paul sees an opportunity of asking a few questions. Indeed, Dickens says that he asked, not a few, but a long string of them. 'He asked the man a multitude of questions about chimes and clocks; as, whether people watched up in the lonely church steeples by night to make them strike, and how the bells were rung when people died, and whether those were different bells from wedding bells, or only *sounded* different in the fancies of the living.' In this last question, Paul gets very near to our own. Do the bells say the things they seem to say, or do they only *seem* to say those things? Did the bells of Geisenheim speak of love to the lovers on the castle terrace? Did the bells of that Hampshire village speak to the little old lady in the deer-park concerning the days of auld lang syne—her happy girlhood and her mother's face? Did the bells of that Australian steeple speak of the old-fashioned English Christmases as their delicious music fell on my delighted ears that summer night?

Of course not! The bells take us as they find us and set us to music; that is all! Paul Dombey, who died young, half suspected it; and Trotty Veck of *The Chimes,* who lived to be old, proved it from experience, and proved it up to the hilt. When things were going badly with Trotty and Richard and Meg, and the magistrate said that people like them should be 'put down' with the utmost rigor of

the law, the chimes, when they suddenly pealed out, made the air ring with the refrain 'Put 'em down; Put 'em down; Facts and Figures; Facts and Figures! Put 'em down! Put 'em down!!' 'If,' says Dickens, 'the chimes said anything, they said this; and they said it until Trotty's brain fairly reeled.' Later on in the story, we have the same chimes, and the same people listening to them. But this time all is going well: Meg and Richard are to be married on the morrow: and Trotty is at the height of his felicity. 'Just then the bells, the old familiar bells, his own dear constant, steady friends —the chimes—began to ring. When had they ever rung like that before? They chimed out so lustily, so merrily, so happily, so gaily, that he leapt to his feet and broke the spell that bound him.' And, a few minutes later, Trotty and Richard and Meg were dancing with delight to the gay, glad music of the bells!

When they themselves were sad, the chimes seemed mournful; when they were glad, the chimes seemed blithe. 'Are they different bells?' asked little Paul Dombey, 'or do they only *sound* different?' Paul was getting very near to the heart of a great truth; and, if only Trotty Veck and he could have talked things over together, they might have given us a philosophy of bells that would have immeasurably enriched our thought.

The chimes are among the things to which distance lends enchantment. The bells, as my little

old lady and I heard them from the deer-park, were sweeter than the same bells heard in the churchyard under the belfry. In his *Cheapside to Arcady,* Mr. Arthur Scammell suggests that the music of the bells awakens the echoes of all the infinites and all the eternities. He finds himself up in the bell-tower. 'After the last stroke of the bell ceases to be heard down in the church,' he says, 'the sound is continued up here in a long diminuendo; and how long will it be before that vibrant hum is completely extinguished? All through the night, the air about the bells may still be throbbing with faint echoes and reverberations; and, if an hour or a night, why not a year or a century? May not even the sound of the first ringing of these old bells yet lisp against the walls and roof in infinitesimal vibrations? The tower may be alive with the thin ghosts of all the joyous and mournful notes that have endeared and embittered the sound of bells to hundreds of human hearts.' And if, following the same line of argument, the music of the bells falls so sweetly on my ear as I sit upon my grassy knoll two miles away from the steeple, who is to say that twenty miles away, a thousand miles away, the air is not trilling and trembling with their delicious melodies? It may be only because my perceptive faculties are so gross, my ears so heavy, that I do not, in this Australian pleasance of mine, catch the chimes of Big Ben and the echoes of Bow Bells. And if Mr. Scammell's philosophy be true of bells, why not of

other sounds? As I ponder his striking suggestion, I find it more easy to understand that great saying that *whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which ye have whispered in the ear shall be shouted from the housetops.*

> The deeds we do, the words we say,
> Into still air they seem to fleet;
> We count them past,
> But they shall last
> To the Great Judgment Day,
> And we shall meet!

The bells are not only *heard* at a distance, they are *better heard* at a distance. It is possible to get so near to them as to miss the music. In his autobiography, James Nasmyth tells us of a visit he paid to the tower of St. Giles, Edinburgh. He had often been charmed by the chimes, and longed to get nearer to them. But the experience brought a rude disillusionment. 'The frantic movements of the musician as he rushed wildly from one key to another, often widely apart, gave me the idea that the man was mad, while the banging of his mallets completely drowned the music of the chimes.' It is possible to get too near to things. You do not see the grandeur of a mountain as you recline upon its slopes. The disciples were too near to Jesus; that explains some of the most poignant tragedies of the New Testament. A minister, through constant association with the sublimities of divine truth, may lose the vision of their eternal

grandeur. And, unless things in the manse are very carefully managed, the members of a minister's family may easily suffer through being too near to things. They do not see the mountain in its grand perspective. The banging of the mallets drowns the music of the bells.

One beautiful June evening, years ago, I was walking along the banks of the Thames. It was Saturday night; I had undertaken to preach at Twickenham on the Sunday. All at once I was arrested by the pealing of the bells. Strangers stopped each other to inquire why the belfries had become vocal at that strange hour. We learned later that the bells were proclaiming the birth of an heir to the British throne. A prince had been born at White Lodge, just across the river! Well might the bells peal that night!

Well, too, may the bells peal on Christmas Eve! I like to think that, over the birth of *that* babe, born in Bethlehem, and cradled in a manger, more bells have been rung than over all the princes since the world began. The Chinese cherish a lovely legend concerning the great bell at Pekin. The Emperor, they say, sent for Kuan-Yin, the caster of the bells, and described the bell that he desired. It was to be larger than any bell ever made, and its tone more beautiful. Its music was to be heard a hundred miles away. Great honors were to be heaped upon the bell-maker if he succeeded; a cruel death was to follow his failure. Kuan-Yin

set to work; he mixed the costliest metals; he labored night and day; and at last he finished the bell. He tested it, and was disappointed. He tried again, and was again mortified. He was at his wits' end. Then Ko-ai, his beautiful daughter, consulted an astrologer. The oracle assured her that, if the blood of a fair virgin mingled with the molten metals, the music would ravish the ears of every listener. Ko-ai returned to the foundry; and, when the glowing metal poured white-hot from the furnace, she plunged into the shining bath before her. The music of the great bell, the Easterns say, is the music of her sacrifice. It is only an Oriental myth; but it strangely helps me to interpret to my heart the solemn sweetness that I recognize in all these Christmas chimes.

VII

'BE SHOD WITH SANDALS'

Is there anything fresh to be said by way of a charge to a young minister? I confess that, until this morning, I thought not. But this morning, to my inexpressible delight, I struck a vein that, so far as I know, has never yet been exploited. On these solemn and impressive occasions, we have talked about the minister's *scholarship* and the minister's *spirituality* until we have come to feel that we have completely exhausted that line of things. And in the process we have given the awkward impression that the minister, so far from being made of pretty much the same stuff as the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker, is a kind of biological monstrosity consisting of a very big head and a very big heart—and of *nothing else!*

But this morning I made a discovery. Before delivering a charge to a young minister, I took the precaution to have a good look at him. And I found to my surprise that, in addition to the head and the heart upon which we have always laid such inordinate emphasis, he also possesses a fine pair of legs with a substantial pair of feet at the end of them! Nobody could have supposed from the

most careful perusal of all the ministerial charges in our literature, that any minister was ever before known to possess these useful appendages; but there they are! I saw them with my own eyes! Perhaps those who delivered the great classical charges only saw the young minister in the pulpit, in which case the limbs which I this morning discovered would naturally be invisible. Like the feet of the seraphim in the prophet's vision, they would be modestly concealed. But, though hidden, they exist; and it occurred to me that a few very useful things could be said concerning them. Why should it be considered *infra dig.*, I should like to know, to talk about people's feet, and especially about a minister's feet? The Bible has no hesitation in talking about them. 'How beautiful upon the mountains,' said the prophet, 'are *the feet* of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.' And did not the Master Himself, when He ordained His first disciples, deliver to them this striking charge? *"Take no shoes,'* He said, *'but be shod with sandals!'* The African natives thought of Livingstone's boots as a contrivance for carpeting all the slave-tracks of Africa with leather, so that he might walk harmlessly and painlessly along them; and when the Saviour tells His first disciples to be shod with sandals I fancy I see miles and miles of meaning in those arresting words.

'Be shod with sandals!' It is an appeal for ministerial simplicity. There were three classes of people in Palestine. The slaves went barefoot; the grandees wore elaborate shoes; the working classes wore sandals. The sandals were simple, serviceable, and strong. Therefore, said the Master to His men, *'be shod with sandals!'* The line of simplicity is invariably the line of strength. Gibbon has shown us that it is the simplest architecture that has defied both the vandalism of the barbarians and the teeth of time. Macaulay has proved that it is the simplest language that lasts longest. John Bunyan's books threaten to survive all later literature. Why? 'The style of Bunyan,' Macaulay says, 'is delightful to every reader, and is invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression which would puzzle the rudest peasant. Several pages do not contain a single word of more than two syllables. Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence; for pathos; for vehement exhortation; for subtle disquisition; for every purpose of the poet, the orator and the divine; this homely dialect, the dialect of plain working men, was perfectly sufficient. There is no book in our literature on which we would so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language, no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper

wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed.' It is ever so. The simplest language is the strongest language, and the simplest lives are the strongest lives. In his 'Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,' Tennyson says that the illustrious Duke was rich in saving commonsense.

> And as the greatest only are
> In his simplicity sublime.

Wherefore, said the Master, avoid the vulgarities of the slave market on the one hand, and the stilted affectations of the schools on the other. Let simplicity ally itself with strength. *'Be shod with sandals!'*

It is a great thing for Christ's minister to eschew this vice of extremes. All through the ages the pendulum of ecclesiastical fashion has been swinging between bare feet and golden slippers. From the excessive worship of unholy revelries, to which the Roman world was abandoned, the Christians of the first century went to the opposite extremity, and courted persecution by their rigid abstinence from, and their severe condemnation of, the most legitimate and necessary pleasures. Back again swung the pendulum, until the churches became the scenes of voluptuous luxury and extravagance. We read on, and the next chapters of our ecclesiastical histories bring us to the story of the monks and the hermits. We no sooner discover an age of un-

exampled self-indulgence, than we straightway come upon the Puritanism that banned *Pilgrim's Progress* as a wanton frivolity, and that denounced the *Fairy Queen* as a wicked and devilish invention! And so we go on. One day Christ's minister would go bare-footed like a slave; the next he must needs affect a pair of golden slippers. There was a time when the Church gloried in her poverty; her emissaries wore no shoes on their feet; they dressed in rags and tatters; they ate the berries of the hedgerow; they drank the waters of the wayside spring. And then, hey presto, the scene is changed. The Church gloried in her wealth. All the world paid tribute to the Popes. Rome rolled in riches; and her proud bishop, Innocent the Fourth, laughed as he looked upon his countless hoards and boasted that never again need the Church lament that of silver and gold she had none! Here is the Church going barefooted like a slave; and here is the Church mincing in golden slippers; and neither spectacle is an edifying one. The Master urges His men to avoid both the bare feet and the golden slippers. Let your moderation be known unto all men. *Be shod with sandals!*

It is the solemn and imperative duty of a Christian minister to conserve both the dignity and the modesty of holy things. A certain offence in the ancient law was to be punished by the deprivation of dignity. *'Thou shalt loose his shoe from off his foot, and his name shall be called in Israel, the*

house of him that hath his shoe loosed.' Those who have carefully read that graceful and dramatic story unfolded in the Book of Ruth know the bitterness of that reproach. The man whose shoes were publicly removed was like an officer whose stripes are taken from his arm in the sight of the whole regiment. He became an object of derision and contempt. Anyone, Dr. Samuel Cox points out, might laugh at him and call him 'Old Baresole,' and his family would be stigmatized as the family of a barefooted vagabond. *Be shod with sandals!* says the Master. Do not expose the Church to the contempt of the multitude! Conserve her dignity! Cast not her pearls before swine! Nor is such dignity inconsistent with simplicity. Dr. Johnson penning from his modest room at Gough Square, that famous letter in which he proudly declined the patronage of the Earl of Chesterfield, makes a much more dignified picture than the gilded aristocrat who tardily fawned to the great man's fame. And George Gissing has shown that the solitaries of Port Royal, reading and praying in their poor apartments, cut a much more stately figure in history than his refulgent Majesty, King Louis the Fourteenth, strutting among the palatial chambers and the spacious gardens of Versailles. When I see the ministers of Christ organizing nail-driving competitions for women, and hat-trimming competitions for men, in order to replenish a depleted treasury, I remember what Jesus said about

the sandals. He pleaded with His men not to expose His Church to contempt. It is better to do things modestly and preserve the Church's dignity than to swell her funds and make her an object of derision. It is better to wear sandals and be respected than to wear golden slippers and provoke disgust.

Modesty and dignity invariably go together. Every man who aspires to the Christian ministry should read every word that Charles Dickens ever wrote. In the course of that humanizing process he will then come upon that terrible fourth chapter of *The Uncommercial Traveller.* It is the most powerful appeal for ministerial modesty in our literature. Can any man read without a shudder that revolting description of evangelistic bluster? And who is he that can read without tenderness that closing appeal of the novelist to preachers? He entreats us to remember the twelve poor men whom Jesus chose, and to model our behavior, our language, our style, and our choice of illustration on the exquisite simplicity and charming grace of the New Testament records.

But we must sound yet a deeper depth. *'Be shod with sandals!'* said the Master. Now sandals are easily slipped *off* and easily slipped *on.* And why should the minister be ready, at a moment's notice, to bare his feet? The man who has read his Bible knows. There came to Moses the Vision of the Burning Bush. 'And the Lord said unto Moses, I am the God of thy father, the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Draw not nigh hither; *put off thy shoes* from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' And when Moses the servant of the Lord died, the Vision of the Captain of the Lord's Host came to Joshua. 'And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, *Loose thy shoe* from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.' *'Be shod with sandals,'* said the Master, so that, the moment the vision comes, you may be ready adoringly to welcome it. Nothing in the ministry is more important than that the minister should keep in touch with his dreams, with his visions, with his revelations. The tragedy of the ministry is reached when we lace up our elaborate shoes and say good-bye to the place of open vision. We never expect again to behold the glory. The ashes are black on the altar of the soul, the altar on which the sacred fires once blazed. The light has gone out of the eye and the ring of passion has forsaken the voice. *'Be shod with sandals!'* said the Master to His men. 'Take no shoes, but be shod with sandals.' The vision that led you into the ministry may come again and again and again. *Be shod with sandals* that you may be ready for the revelation!

Yes, ready for the *Revelation* and ready, also,

for the *Road!* For sandals are easily *slipped on.* And the minister must expect the call of the road at any moment. He must be at home in the silence; he must be ready for the revelation, but he must not become a recluse. That was what Longfellow meant by his *Legend Beautiful.* The vision appeared to the monk in his cell, and he worshipped in its wondrous presence. Then he remembered the hungry at the convent gate.

> Should he slight his radiant guest,
> Slight his visitant celestial,
> For a crowd of ragged, bestial
> Beggars at the convent gate?
> Would the Vision there remain?
> Would the Vision come again?

A voice within bade him go and feed the hungry in the road outside,

> Do thy duty; that is best,
> Leave unto thy Lord the rest.

He went; and when he returned he found to his delight that the Vision was still there.

> Through the long hours intervening,
> It had waited his return,
> And he felt his bosom burn,
> Comprehending all the meaning,
> When the blessed Vision said:
> 'Hads't thou stayed, I must have fled!'

'Be shod with sandals!' said the Master; so that at a moment's notice, you may slip them *off* to

welcome the vision or slip them *on* to take to the road. The crest of the Baptist Missionary Society is a picture of an ox between a plough and an altar, while, underneath the symbols, are the words *'Ready for Either!'* The ox is ready for service in the field or for sacrifice in the temple. Christ's minister stands between the glory and the majesty of things divine on the one hand and all the paths and the prose of human life on the other. He must be ready at any moment to enter into fellowship with the skies; and he must be ready at any moment to hurry forth to see a sick child, to comfort a broken-hearted woman or to share the burden of a man whose load is greater than he can bear. *'Be shod with sandals';* so that, whether the Revelation or the Road shall call, you are ready for either. The ministry is neither mundane nor monastic; the minister wears sandals that he may keep in touch with two worlds.

Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by;
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,
Wise, foolish. So am I.

Let me turn not away from their smiles nor their tears,—
Both parts of an infinite plan,—
Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man!

And there, in his house by the side of the road, the minister will welcome his wondrous visions, and will take good care to *be shod with sandals.* Gurnall

concludes the first volume of his great work in *The Christian Armour* with 'Six Directions for the Helping On of this Spiritual Shoe'; but the man who is wise enough to wear sandals stands in no need of any such elaborate instructions.

PART III

I

WE ARE SEVEN!

TALL, bronzed and bearded, Bruce Sinclair was a typical New Zealand farmer. He was born in Fifeshire, it is true, but his parents had emigrated when he was so young that he seemed to belong to the land of his adoption. They had come out on the *John Macintyre*—one of the first ships to bring settlers to these shores. I never saw the old people. By the time I reached New Zealand, Bruce had laid them to rest in the little God's-acre on the crest, and was himself farming the lands on which they had originally settled. The homestead was up among the foothills near Otokia—about nine miles south of Mosgiel—and Bruce usually rode over on Sundays. One felt that something was missing, if, on going round to the vestry door, 'Oscar,' Bruce's chestnut pony, was not to be seen in the yard. Bruce was quiet and reserved: he seldom spoke unless he was spoken to: but he gave an impression of depth and stability. In his light blue eyes—eyes that seemed paler than they really were by contrast with his sunburned and weatherbeaten countenance—there was a subtle suggestion of secret struggle and secret suffering. You somehow felt that the calm of his sturdy per-

sonality was the peace that comes when mighty forces have been vanquished, and fierce storms stilled. I had heard it whispered that in the early colonial days—the days of his youth—Bruce had chafed under the restraints of home and had for some years gone his own way; but except that I fancied that I saw a look of pain in his face when he first directed my attention to the framed portraits of his parents as they hung on either side of the fireplace at Otokia, he had given me no hint of anything of the kind.

One Sunday morning I missed the chestnut pony. During the week Mrs. Sinclair called at the manse to tell me that Bruce was ill.

'But don't trouble to come,' she said. 'He couldn't see you even if you did; and it's a long way to come for nothing. I'll let you know when he's able to see you.'

True to her word, she at length gave me permission. But, as it happened, I was just setting out for a distant part of the colony—a journey of a thousand miles—and it was nearly a month before I was able to turn my face towards the farm at Otokia. But the day to which I had so long looked forward dawned at last. The dwelling that served Bruce as a homestead was a plain, white box-like little cottage, nestling among the hills about a quarter of a mile back from the road. Seated at the open window, he had seen me enter the big gate at the farm-entrance and drive up the track

from the road to the door. Bowed, and leaning heavily upon two sticks, he came to the doorway to greet me, a wan smile lighting up a countenance that seemed strangely pale. I saw at a glance that he had been very ill.

'But there, I'm better now,' he said, cheerfully, 'and shall soon be all right again. Sit down!' and he pointed to a lounge-chair on the verandah.

We sat there chatting for awhile, and then Mrs. Sinclair brought out the afternoon tea. As soon as the cups had been removed, I rose as if to go.

'Oh, don't be in a hurry!' he said. 'Sit down! I want to tell you of a strange experience I've had.' I resumed my seat.

'You see,' he went on, 'I had a birthday—my fiftieth—just as my illness was at its worst. I had intended having a few very old friends here to celebrate the occasion; but that, of course, was out of the question. The idea had, however, fastened itself so firmly upon my mind that, in my delirium, I thought I was sending out the invitations.' He laughed; but I could see that there was a good deal of seriousness behind it.

'You know how at such times, things get mixed up in your brain,' he went on, 'well, my birthday invitations and the other thoughts that had come to me in the earlier stages of my sickness got hopelessly confused. I was in great distress because I could only think of three people whom I wanted to invite. I wrote out invitations to *The Man I*

Used to Be, The Man I Might Have Been, and *The Man I Shall Be.* I remember thinking that these were strange people to ask; and I was surprised that the number was so small. But the odd part is to come. For, in the same dream or in another—I cannot be sure—I thought that I was welcoming my guests. I had set the table for the four of us—my three visitors and myself—but, to my amazement, twice as many people came as I had invited! I had invited *The Man I Used to Be;* but two men arrived, each of them claiming to be the personage indicated by that description. Exactly the same thing happened in the case of *The Man I Might Have Been,* and again in the case of *The Man I Shall Be.* I was at first very bewildered and confused by the arrival of so many guests; but, excusing myself, I added three chairs to the number at the table, making seven in all. Then, when all was ready, I ushered them in and showed them to their places. And there we sat—the seven of us.

1. *The Man I Am*—at the head of the table.
2. *The Man I Used To Be,* No. 1 } facing me.
3. *The Man I Used To Be,* No. 2 }
4. *The Man I Might Have Been,* No. 1 } on my
5. *The Man I Might Have Been,* No. 2 } left.
6. *The Man I Shall Be,* No. 1 } on my right.
7. *The Man I Shall Be,* No. 2 }

'The first thing that struck me as I surveyed the six faces about me was that, although they

seemed arranged in pairs, no two of the same name bore much resemblance to each other. The couples were contrasts rather than duplicates.' Mrs. Sinclair appeared, bringing her husband's medicine; he drank it quickly and continued his story.

'I can't help laughing as I think of it now,' he went on, 'it seems so very fantastic and absurd; but it was a grimly serious business at the time; and I am afraid that, considered as a birthday frolic, it was scarcely a success. There I sat at the head of the table, my six selves around me. In each of them I could see something of the features that I regularly behold in the mirror; but in each case the general impression was either disfigured or idealized. Let me describe them two by two.

'To begin with, there was *The Man I Used To Be*—the first of that name. He was my guest, and I tried to be civil, but in my heart I could not welcome him. I sat there wondering—you know how such things happen in dreams—by what strange impulse I had invited him to my table. For, truth to tell, I have always dreaded his return. Have you read Grant Allen's story, *The Reverend John Creedy?* I have it inside there: I will ask Mrs. Sinclair to bring it out before you go, and you shall take it with you. I read it a few weeks before my illness, and it made a great impression upon me. It is the story of an African boy, taken from the hold of a slaver on the Gold Coast and carried away to England. He is committed to a Christian home;

is most carefully trained and educated; and is denied nothing that can add to his culture and refinement. He goes to Oxford; becomes a Bachelor of Arts; is ordained, and is designated to return as a missionary to his native land. Before leaving, he marries Miss Ethel Berry, a gently nurtured English lady; and, amidst the good wishes of a great host of admiring friends, the two sail from Southampton for Central Africa. For awhile all goes well; they are very happy and very useful. But, amidst the old environment, the old feelings are stirred. His blood leaps to the sound of the toms-toms; the native feasts and dances have a singular fascination for him; he learns to love once more the native foods and drinks. It is too much for him; his old self masters his new self. He abandons the work; leaves his wife to die; tears up his English clothes; and goes back to savagery. And to-day—so Grant Allen concludes the story—to-day, the old half-caste Portuguese rum-dealer at Butabue, can point out to any English pioneer who comes up the river, which one, among a crowd of dilapidated negroes who lie basking in the soft dust outside his hut, was once the Rev. John Creedy, B.A., of Magdalen College, Oxford. This story, so recently read, may have helped to shape my dream. At any rate, I remember sitting at the head of the table looking into the face of *The Man I Used To Be.* "It is bad enough," I thought to myself, "when the old life comes rushing resistlessly

back upon one as it rushed back upon John Creedy, no bolts or bars being strong enough to keep it out; but by what folly had I *invited* my old self back and seated him at my table?" I felt, as I gazed into his face, as though I had committed the unpardonable sin.

'And there, sitting beside him, was his namesake! You can imagine no more striking contrast. For this second edition of *The Man I Used to Be* appeared to be not only a better man than the other, but a better man than *The Man I Am.* I have never told you much about the past—one does not make a song of such things—but I can tell you that it was a wonderful experience when, nearly thirty years ago, I renounced the old life, entered the kingdom of heaven, and joined a Christian church. As I have said, I would not go back to the old life for anything on earth. And yet, looking back, I can see that, in those early days, I had a few fine qualities that are not mine to-day. I love money more now than I did then. I love comfort more now than I did then. In those days, wayward as I was, I would gladly have given the last coin that I possessed to help a chum. I remember once drawing every penny of my balance at the savings bank to get a comrade out of trouble. I would have faced any discomfort, privation, or even death itself, in an enterprise in which we fellows were engaged together. I am afraid that I am now too smug to be heroic and too self-centred to be really

generous. And, strange as it may seem, as I looked across the table at *The Man I Used To Be*—the second one—I felt heartily ashamed of *The Man I Am*. I was reading in a book of George Eliot's that there are only two kinds of religious people—the people who are the better for their religion and the people who are the worse for it. I am not sure, I know that, on the whole, I am the better for my faith; but I know, too, that before my conversion I had some good points that I have since lost.

'I need not describe my other guests in such detail. If the contrast between the two who answered to the name of *The Man I Used To Be* was great, the contrast between the two who described themselves as *The Man I Might Have Been* was greater still. I was ashamed to admit the first of them to the house, and I could see that several of my guests felt extremely uncomfortable in his presence. This is the man that I should have been today had that radiant experience of nearly thirty years ago never visited me. I saw, as I gazed into the repulsive face of this guest, that, had I continued the career in which, until then, I had delighted, the heroic qualities of my waywardness would soon have vanished, and the sordid elements of that lawless life would have become dominant and supreme. The chivalry of those early days would, in time, have died out of my soul, just as it died out of King Arthur's Court, and the shame and the squalor would have become more pro-

nounced with the years.' Even sitting on the verandah, Bruce Sinclair shuddered as he recalled this aspect of his dream.

'The companion picture—the other edition of *The Man I Might Have Been*—was,' he continued, 'as different as different could be. It seemed ridiculous that they bore the same name. As I looked upon the *first* of this pair I felt thankful that I am as I am; but, when I turned to the *second,* that feeling completely forsook me. For I saw, as I gazed into that face—the face on my immediate left—what I should have been if, jealously retaining all the magnanimous and open-hearted qualities of my early days, I had added to them all the graces and excellences which Christian experience and the membership of the church have made possible to me. But I have done neither the one nor the other. I have lost the high-spirited virtues of my youth, and, like a man who has been walking among diamonds, but has been too indolent to pick them up, I have failed to acquire the ripe devoutness which these later years should have brought. It seems strange now, but on the very last Sunday morning on which I came to church, you were preaching on *The Additions of Grace:* "Add to your faith, virtue: and to virtue, knowledge." Do you remember? You were saying that the art of life lies in adding virtue to virtue as a mason adds tier to tier or as a tree adds ring to ring. I thought a good deal about it afterwards, and it may have woven itself into

my dream. At any rate, I looked into the face beside me; I saw the man that I should have been if only I had added to the generous sentiments of youth the nobler attainments that Christian experience and service offered me; and it was like turning from a masterpiece to a daub when I once more contemplated *The Man I Am.*

'The third pair did not present so strong a contrast. They might easily have passed for brothers, one of whom had enjoyed greater advantages, and moved in better society than the other. The first of those who presented himself as *The Man I Shall Be* strongly resembled, except that he was older, *The Man I Am.* The fact is, I suppose, that, of late years, I have been content to take life, at least on its religious side, pretty much as I found it. I have become complacent, easy-going, readily-satisfied, willing to follow the drift. There was a time, twenty years ago or more, when I used to submit myself to periodical examinations. I tested myself; tried to ascertain whether or not I was growing in grace; felt anxious as to whether the spirit was gaining upon the flesh or the flesh upon the spirit. But of late years I have taken things less seriously, and, now that I have time to think about such matters, I can see that I have settled down to a condition that is perilously like stagnation. Going on at the same sluggish rate for a few more years, I cannot expect that I shall at last differ essentially—except in age—from *The Man I Am;*

and *that,* I suppose, is why the *first* of these two seems in some respects to resemble so closely the man that I see each day in the mirror.

'The *second*—the guest on my immediate right—was a much finer man. He, too, was old; but there was a grace and a sweetness and a charm about his age that was quite absent from the person of his companion. Indeed, but for the association of ideas suggested by the circumstances under which we met, I should never have recognized myself in him. But he has taught me—and I feel that life has been inestimably enriched by the lesson—that, if I set myself to recapture the better qualities that I have lost, and begin diligently to cultivate the graces that I have neglected, I may yet make something of life, and stand, not altogether confused and ashamed, before my Lord at the last.

'I am not sure,' my old friend concluded, 'I am not sure that all this occurred to me in the course of my dream. Much of it has probably suggested itself in my subsequent reflections. In time of sickness and of convalescence a man sees life from a new angle. He is able to do a little stocktaking. And I feel that, in my case, the operation—perhaps because it was particularly necessary—has been particularly profitable.'

Mrs. Sinclair came out to ask if he was feeling chilly. The afternoon sun was certainly sinking; and I am afraid that I had allowed my friend to tire himself in telling me his tale. He made an

excellent recovery, however, and, in the years that followed, was at church more frequently than ever. And it may have been a fond illusion of my own, but somehow I fancied that, as time went on, he became more and more like that nobler, lovelier, kindlier self that he had so graphically described to me.

II

THE FISH-PENS

I WAS holiday-making at Lake King. As a matter of fact, Lake King is no lake at all. It used to be; and, like the Church at Sardis, and like so many of us, it bears the name that it once earned but no longer deserves. In former days, a picturesque rampart of sand hummocks, richly draped in native verdure, intervened between the fresh waters of the land-locked lake and the heaving tides of the Southern Ocean. Then the engineers arrived; and when the engineers take off their coats no man can tell what is likely to happen next. At Panama they split a continent in two. At Lake King they wedded the lake to the ocean. Through the range of sand-dunes they cut a broad, deep channel by which the big ships could pass in and out, and, as an inevitable consequence, Lake King is a lake no longer. But it was not the big ships that interested me. It was the trawlers. I liked to see the fishing-boats come in from the ocean and liberate their shining spoil at the pens. On the shores of the lake the fishermen have fenced off a sheet of water, a quarter of an acre or so in area; and into this sheltered reserve they discharge their daily catch. I never tired of visiting the fish-pens. As I looked

down into their clear waters they seemed to be one moving mass of beautiful fish. Never in my life had I seen so congested an aquarium. There were thousands upon thousands, tons upon tons, of them.

'You should row across in the early morning,' one of the fishermen was good enough to say. 'You would see us dragging the pens and filling the boats with the fish that we were about to pack for the market.'

I took the hint, and shall never forget the animated spectacle that I then witnessed. The waters that had previously seemed so tranquil were a seething tumult of commotion. The men were wading up to their thighs dragging the nets through the crowded pens. Thousands upon thousands of splendid fish were fighting for dear life, excitedly darting and flapping and leaping and diving and splashing in a hopeless attempt to escape the enmeshment of the enfolding toils. Netful after netful was emptied into the boats. In half an hour the boats themselves were filled to the brim with the poor stiffened creatures from which all life and beauty had departed.

'And do the fish keep good in the pens for an indefinite period?' I asked my fisherman friend —the man who had invited me across.

'Oh, dear, no,' he replied, 'that's the trouble. If we could keep them here until the market suited us, we should quickly make our fortunes. But

they soon get slack and soft and flabby. The life in the pens isn't a natural one. They haven't to work for their living and they are in no danger of attack. The palings and wire-netting that keep them *in* keep their natural enemies *out*. In the ocean they have to be active and vigilant and spry. But here they lie at their ease; they move to and fro sluggishly for the mere fun of the thing; and they soon go to pieces in consequence.'

Away on the Dogger Bank the fishermen cherish a tradition which, on suitable occasions, they recite with infinite relish. It belongs to the heroic age that enfolded land and sea before the day of the steam-trawler had dawned. In those unhurried times, the fishing-boats spread their tawny sails, and, to the accompaniment of chanties and choruses such as sailors love, crept slowly out to sea. In sleepy little fishing-villages along the English coast, you may still see craft of this romantic—and historic—build. One little hamlet of the sort I often visit in my dreams. Years ago I knew every pebble on its beach. Winds and waves have scooped out a kind of alcove in the massive cliffs. High up, pressing closely against the rugged wall of chalk, stands a cluster of weather-beaten cottages. In front of them the fishing-boats are drawn up. Nets are spread out on the beach to dry, coils of rope lie about, and piles of tackle are everywhere. If you are as fortunate as I should like you to be, you will see, moving to and fro between his cottage

and his boat, a tall bronzed figure in a blue jersey and a sou'wester. He is the most popular fisherman in the place. He was born here; and, save for two years of which he does not like to think, has spent all his days on this beach. Just once he wandered. He joined the fleet on the Dogger Bank. He worked on the trawler that raced out and raced round and raced back. He saw the cutters darting to and fro between the fleet and the market. And, the more he saw of this side of life, the less he liked it. He returned to the quiet little cove among the cliffs. If, some day, you can catch him in one of his leisure hours, and in one of his garrulous moods, he may be beguiled into telling you of the tales he heard told on the Dogger. For, out there where they fish by machinery, and use tackle of which the little hamlet never dreams, the men like to poke fun at the old-fashioned craft on the beach. And, when they speak of the old days and the old ways, they remind each other that, years ago, each fishing-boat was fitted with a tank or well, constructed with perforated sides so that the water it contained was part and parcel of the sea through which the boat was sailing. Into these wells the fish were transferred from the nets immediately upon their arrival from the deep. In this new environment the graceful creatures gave no evidence of discontent or resentment. They would live indefinitely in their floating homes. But the fishermen found that, like the fish in these Australian pens, the fish in the

wells waxed limp and listless. They lost their flavor and sweetness. This, according to the tradition, happened to all the fishing-boats save one.

One fisherman, and one only, brought his fish to market in excellent condition. He landed them at Billingsgate as healthy and brisk and firm as though he had caught them ten minutes earlier under London Bridge. The dealers soon learned to distinguish between the fish from his boat and the fish from all the others. His fish brought the highest prices on the market, and the happy fisherman rejoiced in his abounding prosperity. His comrades marvelled at his success and vainly endeavored to cajole his secret from him. He was not to be drawn. The matter remained an inscrutable mystery until the day of the old fisherman's death. Then, acting upon her father's instructions, his daughter unfolded the secret. Her father, she said, made it a rule to keep a catfish in the well of his boat. The catfish kept the other fish in a ferment of agitation and alarm. They were never at rest. And, because a catfish compelled them to live in the well under conditions that were approximately normal, they came to market in as wholesome a state as though they had just been dragged from the deep.

I often take myself into a quiet corner and remind myself of my visit to the fish-pens or repeat to myself the famous tradition of the catfish. I find myself at times in a rebellious mood. Why is life

so troubled, so agitated, so disturbed? If only I could be left alone! Why may I not fold my hands and be quiet? I am hunted up hill and down dale; I am driven from pillar to post. I have to work for my living—an irksome necessity. I often have to go out when I would rather stay in, and have to stay in when I would rather go out. I am the prey of antagonisms of many kinds. Life is full of irritations, annoyances, mortifications, and disappointments. I am not my own master. Like Paul, *I find a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me; the good that I would I do not and the evil which I would not that I do.* Paul found it extremely exasperating, and so do I. If only I could live without work and without worry and without any of my present vexations! Why, oh why, must there always be a catfish in my well?

A catfish is an animated compliment. I do not suppose that a *Dictionary of Oceanography* or a *Cyclopædia of Pisciculture* would define a catfish precisely in that way. But I prefer my own definition to that of the encyclopædia; it is more brief and it is quite as accurate. A catfish, I repeat, is an animated compliment. It is because the fisherman values his fish that he puts the catfish into the well to annoy them. 'I remember,' says Dr. James Stalker, 'I remember hearing a celebrated naturalist describe a species of jellyfish, which, he said, lives fixed to a rock from which it never stirs. It does not require to go in search of food, because

in the decayed tissues of its own organism there grows a kind of seaweed on which it subsists. I thought I had never heard of any creature so comfortable. But the eminent naturalist who was describing it went on to say that it is one of the very lowest forms of animal life, and the extreme comfort which it enjoys is the badge of its degraded position.' Now this seems to throw a little light on my own discontent. No fisherman would take any pains to preserve such worthless things. When the fisherman drops the hideous catfish into the well, it is his way of telling the shiny creatures that are already there of the high esteem in which he holds them.

This leads me to Robinson Crusoe. Robinson Crusoe caught a glimpse of this doctrine of the catfish, and it dispelled some of his most acute perplexities. The pity of it is that, later on, when he found himself confronted by the gravest and most baffling bewilderment of all, he failed to apply to it the same vital principle. He saw the law at work among his *minor* difficulties; it did not occur to him that it might also operate among the *major* ones.

A day came on which Crusoe discovered that he was not, as he had fancied, the monarch of all he surveyed. His sovereignty was disputed. Everybody remembers the haunting passage about the footprint on the sand. 'It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceed-

ingly surprised with the print of a man's foot on the shore. How it came thither I knew not, nor could I in the least imagine; but after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I trod upon, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump to be a man. Nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes my affrighted imagination represented things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange, unaccountable whimseys came into my thoughts by the way.' Now this story of Crusoe and the cannibals is simply the story of the cod and the catfish in another form. The cod would have liked the well all to itself: it is horrified at discovering that it must share it with a catfish!

Yet, as we have seen, the cod were the better for the catfish; and, as Crusoe afterwards recognized, the island was enriched by the coming of the cannibals. *Robinson Crusoe* is essentially a story with a moral; and Crusoe leaves you in no doubt as to the moral. He is most explicit in that regard. 'For,' he tells us, 'I began to be very well contented with the life that I was leading, if only I could have been secured from the dread of the savages.' How little he thought that, so far from hurting a single hair of his head, the savages

would provide him, in the person of his man Friday, with the most devoted servant and most constant friend that any man could possibly possess! *'Wherefore,'* he says, in formulating the moral to be deduced from his sensational experience, *'wherefore it may not be amiss for all people who shall read this story of mine to learn from it that very frequently the evil which we seek most to shun, and which, when we are fallen into, is the most dreadful to us, is oftentimes the very means or door of our deliverance, by which alone we can be raised again from the affliction into which we have fallen.'*

Now this was the *minor* perplexity; the *major* one came later. And the extraordinary thing is that, confronted by that larger perplexity, Crusoe's own maxim does not seem to have recurred to him. Crusoe has met the cannibals; they have come and gone; and they have left Friday behind them. Crusoe has taught Friday to speak English, and is doing his best to store his mind with the highest knowledge of all. 'One day,' so runs his narrative, 'I had been teaching him that the devil was God's enemy in the hearts of men, and used all his malice and skill to defeat the good designs of Providence, and to ruin the kingdom of Christ in the world. "Well," replies Friday, in broken English, "but you say God is so strong, so great; is he not much strong, much mighty as the devil?" "Yes, yes, Friday," I replied, "God is stronger than the devil; God is above the devil, and therefore we pray to

God to tread him down under our feet and enable us to resist his temptations and quench his fiery darts." "But," says he again, "if God much stronger, much mighty as the wicked devil, *why God no kill the devil,* so make him no more do wicked?" I was strangely surprised at this question; and, after all, though I was now an old man, yet I could not tell what to say, so I pretended not to hear him. But Friday kept repeating his question in the same broken words: *"Why God no kill the devil?"* I therefore diverted the discourse by rising up hastily and sending him for something a long way off.' It was the greatest humiliation that Robinson Crusoe sustained during his long sojourn on the island.

'Why God no kill the devil?' asked Friday. It sometimes happens that the best way of answering one question is to ask a few more. Let us try. *'Why God no kill the devil?'* Why did the shrewd old fisherman not kill the catfish in the well of his boat? Why did the fish in the pens grow slack and soft and flabby as soon as the palings and wire-netting cut them off from the assaults of their natural enemies? 'In the Louvre,' says Professor William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* 'in the Louvre there is a picture by Guido Reni of St. Michael with his foot on Satan's neck. The richness of the picture is in large part due to the fiend's figure being there. The richness of its allegorical meaning also is due to his being there.

The world, that is to say, is *all the richer for having a devil in it,* so long as we keep our foot upon his neck.'

It is an old story. It is the tree that is buffeted by the wind that develops the strongest roots and the sturdiest fibre. It is in the carcase of the lion with which he fought for his life that Samson finds the honey. 'I did not learn to preach all at once,' says Martin Luther, in a delightful burst of confidence. 'It was my temptations and my corruptions that best prepared me for my pulpit. The devil has been my best professor of exegetical and experimental divinity. Before that great schoolmaster took me in hand, I was a sucking child and not a grown man. It was my combats with sin and with Satan that made me a true minister of the New Testament. It is always a great grace to me, and to my people, for me to be able to say to them, "I *know* this text to be true! I know it *for certain!*" Without incessant combat and pain and sweat and blood, no ignorant stripling of a student ever yet became a powerful preacher.' That is the lesson that I learned at the fish-pens. That is the secret that the wise old fisherman, of catfish fame, bequeathed to his mystified companions. That is what Robinson Crusoe learned in the course of his long and lonely exile. And, in the rough and tumble of common life, there is scarcely any lesson of greater value to be learned.

III

EDGED TOOLS

I WAS motoring among the semi-tropical landscapes of Queensland. We swept past gardens that were gay with scarlet flame trees, brilliant creepers, bright-red corals, and bougainvilleas of many gorgeous hues. Spread out in endless panorama about us were orange groves, vineyards, sugar plantations, and fields in which the pineapple, the banana, the paw-paw, the mango, and the bread-fruit luxuriated. And then we burst into the bush, which only differed from the bush to which I was more accustomed in that it was sprinkled with enormous anthills and dotted with green clumps of prickly pear.

After several hours spent in this delightful way, the car unexpectedly stopped, and my host and hostess prepared to alight. I peered about me for some explanation of their behavior, but could nowhere discover one. There was no house to be seen nor any sign of civilization or of settlement. My first impulse was to remain in the car with the driver.

'We are going a little way into the bush,' my host explained, addressing me; 'if you care to come with us, we shall be very pleased.'

I joined them instantly, and we were soon out of sight of the car. We picked our way through the thick undergrowth for about a quarter of a mile, then emerged upon a little plot carefully fenced off from the surrounding wilderness. It was a cemetery only a few feet square; and it contained three graves! It was evidently to the central one that our pilgrimage had been made. My companions stood in silence for a moment beside it, and then seated themselves on the grass near by.

'In our early days,' my host explained, 'we used to live not very far from here. It was a lonely place and a hard life; and it had joys and sorrows of its own. The greatest of its joys was the birth of Don, our firstborn; and the greatest of our sorrows was his death. He was only five when we buried him.'

'Yes,' added his wife, brushing a tear from her eye, 'and we buried him with a broken penknife in his hand. A swagman who had sheltered for the night in one of the out-buildings had given it to him before leaving in the morning, and Don thought it the most wonderful thing he had ever possessed. He was working away with it from morning to night. He would not trust it out of his sight. He had it in his hand when, a few days afterwards, he was taken ill. He clung to it all through his sickness. If he dropped it in his sleep, he asked for it as soon as he woke. He raved about it in his delirium. And it was firmly clasped in

his hand when he died. We had not the heart to take it from him, and so he went down to his grave still holding it.'

Often since I have thought of that burial in the bush, not merely because the incident was so touching, but because it was so intensely characteristic. A boy's infatuation for his first pocket knife! It may have a rusty handle and a broken blade; the edge may be as jagged as the edge of a saw and the spring may have vanished with the days of long ago; it makes no difference. With a knife in his hand a boy feels that he is monarch of all he surveys. With a knife in his hand he feels himself every inch a man. A boy's first consciousness of power, of dominion, of authority comes to him on the day on which he grasps his first knife. It is by means of a knife that he carves his way to destiny.

Civilization may be said to have dawned on the day on which the first man in the world held in his hand the first knife in the world. It was made of stone, like the knives of all savage and primitive peoples. It came into his possession almost by chance. He was gathering together some huge stones, and building for himself a wall. Presently one heavy stone slipped from his hands, fell with a crash upon another, and broke. But it was not a clean break. There lay at that first man's feet two large fragments of stone and a multitude of splinters. He picked up the largest of the splinters and found that it had a keen, sharp edge. He cut

his finger as he stroked it, and the blood crimsoned the stone. He dropped it as he would have dropped a snake that had bitten him. But, as he nursed his smarting hand, he saw the possibilities that the sharp-edged splinter opened to him. He remembered the toil with which he had torn down branches of trees and shaped them to his use. The splinter would simplify his task. He forgot his lacerated finger. He seized another stone, dashed it against its neighbor, and, by repeating the process, soon secured for himself a more shapely splinter—a splinter with which he could cut down the branches less laboriously. He tried it. He laughed as he found that, armed with the splinter, he could hack the yielding timber to his will. He was more excited than he had ever been before. Here was the first man with his first knife—the pioneer man with the pioneer knife! For that first man was the father of men of many colors, and that first knife was the father of blades of many kinds. From it sprang the sickle and the scythe, the chisel and the saw, the spade and the tomahawk, the rapier and the dagger, the scalpel and the poniard, the razor and the sword.

The joy that the boy feels as he looks lovingly on his first knife is the joy of shaping things. The world about him has suddenly become plastic. It is a block of marble and he is the sculptor. He may make of it what he will. Until he possessed a knife, the hard inanimate substances about him

defied him. He was the bird and they were the bars. But now *he* defies *them*. The knife makes all the difference. The knife is his sceptre. He is a king and all things are subject to him.

He may, of course, abuse his power. He probably will. A boy with a knife is very liable to carve his name in the polished walnut of the piano or to cut notches out of the neatly-turned legs of the dining-room table. From all parts of the world people go on pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey. And, at the Abbey, they are shown the Coronation Chair. Seated in it, all our English sovereigns have been crowned, and it is encrusted with traditions that go back to the days of the patriarchs. But a boy with a knife feels no reverence for antiquity. On the night of July 5, 1800, a Westminster schoolboy got locked in the Abbey. He curled himself up in the Coronation Chair and made it his resting-place until morning. And, in the morning, he thought of his pocket-knife. And, as the dawn came streaming through the storied eastern windows, he carved deeply into the solid oak of the seat of the chair, the notable inscription: *P. Abbot slept in this chair, July* 5, 1800. Thus he buried his blade in one of the noblest of our great historic treasures. It was enough to make the illustrious dead, by whom he was everywhere surrounded, turn in their ancient graves. George the Fourth and all his successors have since been crowned in a Chair that bears that impertinent record! Yet, as the chips

flew, the boy felt no compunction. And, in his stolid calm, he is the type and representative of all who abuse the authority with which they are invested. He feels, as he wields the knife, that all things are at his mercy; he can shape them to his liking. He forgets that power carries its attendant obligations, and that, foremost among those obligations, is the obligation to restraint. A boy with a knife in his hand is merely a miniature edition of a man with a sword in his hand. And a man with a sword in his hand is often tempted to bury his blade in that which is even more precious than the oak of a Coronation Chair. Piano-frames and table-legs are not the only things that cry aloud for protection. The greatest lesson that the world has learned in our time is that the power of the sword involves its possessor in a responsibility that is simply frightful. The blood of brave men, the tears of good women, and the hard-earned wealth of nations must never be frivolously or lightheartedly outpoured.

From the moment at which, with sparkling eyes, that first man seized that first sharp splinter, the knife has steadily grown upon the imaginations of men. It took a thousand generations to discover its potentialities. Indeed, our own generation is only just beginning to realize the possibilities that it unfolds. Think of the marvels—I had almost said the miracles—of modern surgery.

'Let nothing share your heart with your knife!'

said Dr. Ferguson to Barney Boyle, in *The Doctor of Crow's Nest.* The old doctor had just fallen in love with Barney. He liked his looks, he liked his temperament, and he liked his hands.

'You must be a surgeon, Barney! You've got the fingers and the nerves! A surgeon, sir! That's the only thing worth while. The physician can't see further below the skin than any one else. He guesses and experiments, treats symptoms; tries one drug and then another. But the knife, my boy!' The doctor rose and paced the floor in his enthusiasm. 'The knife, boy! There's no guess in the knifepoint. The knife lays bare the evil, fights it, eradicates it! The knife at the proper moment saves a man's life. A slight incision an inch or two long, the removal of the diseased part, a few stitches, and, in a couple of weeks, the patient's well! Ah, boy, God knows I'd give my life to be a great surgeon. But he didn't give me the fingers. Look at these!' and he held up a coarse, heavy hand. 'I haven't the touch. But you have! You have the nerve and the fingers and the mechanical ingenuity; you can be a great surgeon. You shall have all my time and all my books and all my money; I'll put you through! You must think, dream, sleep, eat, drink bones and muscles and sinews and nerves! Push everything else aside!' he cried, waving his great hands excitedly. 'And remember!'—here his voice took a solemn tone—*'let nothing share your heart with your knife!'*

Let nothing share your heart with your knife! That is always the knife's appeal. It is a plea for concentration. I was talking to an old gardener the other day. He was pruning his trees. The gleaming blade was in his hand and the path was littered with the wreckage of the branches. He seemed to be working a shocking havoc, and I told him so. He laughed.

'Oh, they're well-meaning things, are trees!' he exclaimed. 'They are anxious to do their best for you, but they attempt too much, far too much. Just look at this one!' and he laughed again. 'It thought it could cover all these branches with roses; and, if we left it alone, it would try. But what sort of roses would they be, I should like to know? No, no, no; it is better for them to produce fewer blossoms but to produce good ones. We mustn't let them attempt too much!'

'Let nothing share your heart with your knife!' said old Dr. Ferguson, as he urged Barney to do just one thing and to do that one thing well.

'We mustn't let the rose-trees attempt too much said the old gardener, as he lopped off the branches with his pruning-knife.

That seems to be the lesson that the knife is always teaching. I remember going one bright afternoon to see Gregor Fawcett of Mosgiel. Gregor was passing through a troublous and trying time. Hard on top of heavy business losses had come the collapse of his health. To my delight,

however, I found him in a particularly cheerful mood.

'I've been reading aboot the knife, d'ye ken?' he explained. 'It's a bonny passage!' He took the open Bible from the table beside the bed and pointed me to the fifteenth of John. *'Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, he cutteth away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he pruneth it that it may bring forth more fruit.'*

'It brought me a power o' comfort,' Gregor explained. 'For it says, ye ken, that there are only two sorts o' wood on the tree—the *dead* wood and the *live* wood. He cuts away the *dead* wood for the sake of the live wood that he leaves; and he cuts the *live* wood that bears fruit so that it may bear still more and still better fruit. Well, I thocht o' all the losses I've had lately. I dinna ken whether the things that have been taken were *dead* things or *live* things, but it doesna matter. If they were *dead* things, I'm better without them. And, if they were *live* things, they were only cut away because my life is like a tree that bears fruit and that may yet bear more. And, in either case, the best remains. The tree is the richer and not the poorer for the pruning. The pruning only shows that the gardener cares. Ay, it's a bonny passage that!' and Gregor laid the open Bible lovingly on the pillow beside him. 'After you've gone,' he said, 'I shall go over it again!'

And, from the frequency with which he quoted

the words to buffeted spirits in the days that followed, I could see that, on that further inspection, Gregor had kissed the husbandman's knife even more reverently and rapturously than before.

IV

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

We badly need an Asylum for Antiquated Portraiture—a pleasant and hospitable refuge in which all our old photographs could be carefully preserved and reverently handled. For lack of such an institution we are all in difficulties. People come into our lives; we become attached to them and value their friendship; we exchange photographs; and, as soon as we have done so, the inevitable happens. The photographs get hopelessly out of date. Friends come and go; we come and go; but the photographs remain. Or, if the friends themselves abide, they change; fashions change; and, in a few years, the photographs look singularly archaic if not positively ridiculous. They go away into a drawer or a box. Once or twice a year a spring-cleaning or other volcanic upheaval reminds us of their existence. 'We must really sort these out and destroy a lot of them!' we say; but we never do it. Everybody knows why. It seems a betrayal of old confidences, an outrage upon sentiment, a heartless sacrilege. There should be an asylum for obsolete portraiture, or, if that is out of the question, we should do with the photographs what Nansen and Johansen, the Polar explorers, did with their dogs.

Neither had the heart to shoot his own; so, amid the ice and snow of the far north, they exchanged their canine companions, and each went sadly and silently away and shot the other's!

Such a course must, however, be regarded as a makeshift and a subterfuge. The asylum is the thing. I am opposed, tooth and nail, to the destruction of old photographs under any conditions. I spent an hour yesterday afternoon down by the lake reading some of the love-letters that Mozart wrote to his wife nearly two centuries ago. Poor Johann and poor Stanzerl! They were so pitifully penniless that when, one bitter winter's morning, a kindly neighbor fought his way through the deep snow to see how the young couple were getting on, he found them dancing a waltz on the bare boards of their narrow room. They could not afford a fire, and this was their device for keeping warm. And now Johann is away on a business trip. In our time a husband so situated would send his wife a telegram to say that he had arrived safely, or, perhaps, buy her a picture-postcard of the view from his hotel window. But Mozart wrote the prettiest love-letters. 'Dear little wife,' he says, 'if I only had a letter from you! If I were to tell you all that I do with your dear likeness, how you would laugh! For instance, when I take it out of its case, I say "God greet thee, Stanzerl, God greet thee, thou rascal, shuttlecock, pointy-nose, nicknack, bit and sup!" And, when I put it back,

I let it slip in very slowly, saying, with each little push, "Now—now—now!" and at the last, quickly —"Good-night, little mouse, sleep well!" ' Where is that portrait now? I dread to hazard a conjecture! There was, alas, no asylum to which it could be fondly and reverently entrusted. Photographs, like fashions, are capable of strange revivals. One never knows when crinolines or hobble skirts will reappear; and in the same way, one never knows the moment at which some quaint old faded photograph will acquire new and absorbing interest.

'Why, bless me,' you exclaim, as you lay down the newspaper, 'here's Charlie Brown become famous! You remember Charlie; he was the second son of the Browns who lived opposite us at Kensington! Why, I have a photograph of him, taken when he was a little boy; I'll run and get it!' But alas, it has been destroyed. Or the regret may be even more poignant.

'Dear me,' you say, 'poor old Mary Smith is dead!' The announcement brings with it, as such announcements have a way of doing, a rush of reminiscence. A simple old soul was Mary Smith. She was very good to us, five and twenty years ago, when the children were all small and sicknesses were frequent. Mary always knew exactly what to do. But we moved away, and the years went by. Letter-writing was not in Mary's line. With the obituary notice still before us, we talk of Mary and the old days for awhile, and then we suddenly

remember that, when we came away, Mary gave us her photograph. It was a quaint, old-fashioned picture; it had been taken some years earlier; but we were glad to have it, and we put it with the others. We must slip up and get it! But it, too, has vanished! Somehow, Mary *living* did not seem quite so pathetic and lovable a figure as Mary *dead*. At some spring-cleaning we must have glanced at the creased and faded portrait, and, without pausing to allow memory to do such vivid work as she has done to-day, we must have tossed it out. We feel horribly ashamed. If only we could recover the old photograph we would stand it on the mantelpiece and do it signal honor. And to think that, in the confusion of cleaning-up, we threw it out, perhaps tore it up, perhaps even burned it. We shudder at the thought, and half hope that, in her new and larger life, Mary—who seems nearer to us now than she did before we read of her passing—does not know that we were guilty of treachery so base.

Thus there come into our lives moments when photographs assert their worth and insist on being appraised at their true value. In the stirring chapter in which Sir Ernest Shackleton tells of the loss of his ship among the ice-floes, he describes an incident that must have set all his readers thinking. In the grip of the ice, the *Endurance* had been smashed to splinters; and the entire party were out on a frozen sea at the mercy of the pitiless elements.

Shackleton came to the conclusion that their best chance of eventually sighting land lay in marching to the opposite extremity of the floe; at any rate, it would give them something to do, and there is always solace in activity. He thereupon ordered his men to reduce their personal baggage to two pounds weight each. For the next few hours every man was busy in sorting out his belongings—the treasures that he had saved from the ship. It was a heart-breaking business. Men stole gloomily and silently away and dug little graves in the snow, to which they committed books, letters, and various nicknacks of sentimental value. And, when the final decisions had to be made, they threw away their little hoards of golden sovereigns and kept the photographs of their sweethearts and wives!

The same perplexity arises, sooner or later, in relation to the portraits and pictures on our walls. They become obsolete; but we find it difficult to order their removal. I had intended, long before this, devoting an essay to the whole subject of *Pictures*. Why must we smother our walls with pictures? To begin with, the pattern of the paper is often a series of pictures in itself, while the dado and the border simply add to the collection. Then, over these, we carefully arrange a multitude of others. Paintings, engravings, and photographs hang everywhere. Why do we cover the walls in this way? The answer is that we cover the walls in

order to cover the walls. The walls represent an imprisonment; the pictures represent an escape. On the wall in front of me, for example, there hangs a water-color sketch of Piripiki Gorge, our New Zealand holiday resort. On a winter's night, when the rain is lashing against the windows and the wind shrieking round the house, I glance up at it, and, by some magic transition, I am roaming on a summer's evening over the old familiar hills with my gun in my hand and John Broadbanks by my side. Through the medium of those landscapes, how many tireless excursions have I taken, by copse and beach and riverbank, without so much as rising from my chair? The photographs hanging here and there around the room transport my mind to other days and other places. The apartment in which I sit may be extremely small, just as the space that I occupy on the summit of a mountain may be extremely small. But, occupying that small space upon that lofty eminence, I command a view that loses itself in infinity; and, lounging in my comfortable chair in this little snuggery of mine, the pictures transform it into an observatory, and I am able to survey the entire universe. You do not hang pictures in the cells of a jail; the reason is obvious; you do not wish the prisoners to escape; you think it good that they should feel the stern tyranny of those four uncompromising walls. Conversely, you deck the dining-room with pictures because, there, you do *not* desire to feel imprisoned;

you do *not* wish the walls to seem tyrannical. As Mr. Stirling Bowen sings:

Four walls enclose men, yet how calm they are!
  They hang up pictures that they may forget
What walls are for in part, forget how far
  They may not run and riotously let
Their laughter taunt the never-changing stars.

In circus cages wolves and tigers pace
  For ever to and fro. They do not rest,
But seek so nervously the longed-for place.
  Our picture-jungles would not end their quest,
Or pictures of another tiger's face.

On four square walls men have their world, their strife,
  Their painted, framed endeavors, joys and pain;
And two curators known as man and wife
  Hang up the sunrise, wipe the dust from rain,
And gaze excitedly on painted life.

A picture on the wall is like a window—only more so! A window looks out on the garden or the street; a picture is an opening into infinity. The view from my window is controlled by circumstances. I cannot, for example, live in this Australian home of mine and command, from my window, a view of York Minster, the Bridge of Sighs, or the Rocky Mountains. And, even if I could, the darkness of each night would enfold the pleasing prospect in its sombre and impenetrable veil. But the pictures do for me what windows could never do. By means of the pictures I cut holes in the walls and look out upon any landscape that takes my

fancy. And, when evening comes, I draw the blinds, illumine the room from within, and the panorama that has so delighted me in the day-time reveals fresh charms in the softer radiance of the lamps.

We all owe more to pictures than we have ever yet begun to suspect. Here is a merry young romp of a schoolboy, of tousle-head and swarthy face; loving the open-air and hating books like poison. A lady gives him a ponderous volume, and he turns away with a sneer. But one day he casually opens it. There is a colored picture. It represents Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday in the midst of one of their most exciting adventures. The boy —George Borrow—seized the book, carried it off, and never rested until he had read it from cover to cover. It opened his eyes to the possibilities of literature; and, to his dying day, he declared that, but for that colored print, the world would never have heard his name or read a line from his pen. Nor is this all. For it is probable that, in infancy, our minds receive their first bias towards—or away from—sacred things from the pictures of biblical subjects and biblical characters that are then, wisely or unwisely, exposed to our gaze. The Face that, in the secret chambers of our hearts, we think of as the Face of Jesus is, in all likelihood, the Face that we saw in the first picture-book that mother showed us.

But I fear that I have wandered. I set out to

talk, not so much about pictures, as about photographs—photographs in general and old photographs in particular. Have photographs—and especially old photographs—no ethical or spiritual value? Is there a man living who has not, at some time, felt himself rebuked by eyes that looked down at him from a frame on the wall? I often feel, in relation to the photographs around the room, as Tennyson felt in relation to the spirits of those whom he had loved long since and lost awhile. It is lovely to think that those who have passed from our sight are not, in reality, far from us. And yet—

> Do we indeed desire the dead
> Should still be near us at our side?
> Is there no baseness we would hide?
> No inner vileness that we dread?
>
> Shall he for whose applause I strove,
> I had such reverence for his blame,
> See with clear eye some hidden shame
> And I be lessen'd in his love?

Who has not been conscious of a similar feeling under the searching glances of the eyes upon the wall? They seem at times to pierce our very souls. Tennyson came at last to the comfortable assurance that the shrinking fear with which he thought of his dead friends was not justified. For, he reflected, those who have gone out of the dusk into the daylight have acquired, not only a loftier purity, but a larger charity.

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
  Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
  There must be wisdom with great Death:
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
  Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
  With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

It is pleasant to transfer that thought to the photographs around the room. They hang there all day and every day; they hear all that we say and see all that we do; those quiet eyes seem to read us narrowly. Yet if, on the one hand, they see more in these secret souls of ours to *blame,* it is possible that, on the other, they see more to *pity.* The judgements that we most dread are the judgements of those who only partly understand. The drunkard shrinks from the eyes of those who see his debauchery but know nothing of his temptation. There is something wonderfully comforting and strengthening in the clear eyes of those who see, not a part merely, but the whole.

Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, adorned his study wall with a fine picture of Henry Martyn. It is very difficult to say which of the two owed most to the other. In the days when he was groping after the light, Henry Martyn—then a student—fell under the influence of Mr. Simeon, and no other minister helped him so much. But, later on, when Henry Martyn was illumining the Orient with the

light of the gospel, his magnetic personality and heroic example exerted a remarkable authority over the ardent mind of the eminent Cambridge scholar. Mr. Simeon began to feel that, in some subtle and inexplicable way, the portrait on the wall was influencing his whole life. The picture was more than a picture. A wave of reverential admiration swept over him whenever he glanced up at it. He caught himself talking to it, and it seemed to speak to him. His biographer says that 'Mr. Simeon used to observe of Martyn's picture, while looking up at it with affectionate earnestness, as it hung over his fireplace: "There! see that blessed man! What an expression of countenance! No one looks at me as he does! He never takes his eyes off me, and seems always to be saying: *Be serious! Be in earnest! Don't trifle! don't trifle!*" Then smiling at the picture and gently bowing, he added: *"And I won't trifle; I won't trifle!"*' His friends always felt that the photograph over the fireplace was one of the most profound and effective influences in the life and work of Charles Simeon; and nobody who treasures a few reproving and inspiring pictures of the kind will have the slightest difficulty in believing it.

The photographs upon my wall are never tyrannical; else why should I prefer them to the cold, imprisoning walls? But, though never tyrannical, they are always authoritative. They speak, not harshly, but firmly. In the nature of the case, these

are the faces I revere—the faces of those whom I have enthroned within my heart. Being enthroned, they command. They sometimes say *Thou shalt:* they sometimes say *Thou shalt not.* They sometimes suggest; they sometimes prohibit.

And now, before I lay down my pen, shall I reveal the circumstance that led me to this train of thought? I am writing at Easter-time. On Good Friday a lady presented me with an exquisitely sad but unspeakably beautiful picture—a picture of the Thorn-crowned Face. Where am I to hang it? It will insist, tenderly but firmly, on a suitable and harmonious environment. Henry Drummond used to tell of a Cambridge undergraduate whose sweetheart visited his room. She found its walls covered with pictures of actresses and racehorses. She said nothing, but, on his birthday, presented him with a picture like this. A year later she again called on him at Cambridge. The Thorn-crowned Face hung over the fireplace; and the other walls were adorned with charming landscapes and reproductions of famous paintings. He caught her glancing at her gift.

'It's made a great difference to the room,' he said; 'what's more, it's made a great difference *in me!*'

That is a way our pictures have. They insist on ruling everything and everybody. I have no right to enthrone a despot in my home; nor to exalt a Thorn-crowned King unless I am prepared to make Him Lord of all.

V

A BOX OF BLOCKS

I

We had a birthday at our house to-day, and among the presents was a beautiful box of blocks. Each block represented one of the letters of the alphabet. As I saw them being arranged and rearranged upon the table, I fell a-thinking. For the alphabet has, in our time, come to its own. We go through life muttering an interminable and incomprehensible jargon of initials. We tack initials on to our names—fore and aft—and we like to see every one of them in its place. As soon as I open my eyes in the morning, the postman hands me a medley of circulars, postcards and letters. One of them bids me attend the annual meeting of the S.P.C.A.; another reminds me of the monthly committee meeting of the M.C.M.; a third asks me to deliver an address at the P.S.A. In the afternoon I rush from an appointment at the Y.M.C.A. to speak on behalf of the W.C.T.U.; and then, having dropped in to pay my insurance premium at the A.M.P., I take the tram at the G.P.O., and ask the conductor to drop me at the A.B.C. I have accepted an invitation to a pleasant little function there—an invitation that is clearly marked R.S.V.P. And so on.

There is no end to it. Life may be defined as a small amount of activity entirely surrounded by the letters of the alphabet.

Now the alphabet has a symbolism of its own. The man who coined the phrase *'as simple as A.B.C.'* went mad; he went mad before he coined it. There are, it is true, a few simplicities sprinkled among the intricacies of this old world of ours; but the alphabet is not one of them. I protest that it is most unfair to call the alphabet simple. Nobody likes to be thought simple nowadays; see how frantically we preachers struggle to avoid any suspicion of the kind! Any man living would rather be called a sinner—or even a saint—than a simpleton. Why, then, affront the alphabet, which, as we have seen, is working a prodigious amount of overtime in our service, by applying to it so very opprobrious an epithet?

'As simple as A.B.C.,' indeed! Macaulay's schoolboy may not have been as omniscient as the historian would lead us to believe, but he at least knew that there is nothing simple about the A.B.C. The alphabet is the hardest lesson that a child is called upon to learn. Latin roots, algebraic equations, and the *Pons Asinorum* are mere nothings in comparison. Grown-ups have short memories. They forget the stupendous difficulties that they surmounted in their earliest infancy; and their forgetfulness renders them pitiless and unsympathetic. Few of us recognize the strain in which a child's

brain is involved when, for the first time, he confronts the alphabet. The whole thing is so arbitrary; there is no clue. In his noble essay on *The Evolution of Language,* Professor Henry Drummond shows that the alphabet is really a picture-gallery. 'First,' he says, 'there was the onomatopoetic writing, the ideograph, the imitation of the actual object. This is the form we find in the Egyptian hieroglyphic. For a man a man is drawn, for a camel a camel, for a hut a hut. Then, to save time, the objects were drawn in shorthand—a couple of dashes for the limbs and one across, as in the Chinese, for a man; a square in the same language for a field; two strokes at an obtuse angle, suggesting the roof, for a house. To express further qualities, these abbreviated pictures were next compounded in ingenious ways. A man and a field together conveyed the idea of wealth; a roof and a woman represented home; and so on. And thus, little by little, our letters were evolved. But the pictures have become so truncated, abbreviated and emasculated, in the course of this evolutionary process, that a child, though notoriously fond of pictures, sees nothing fascinating in the letters of the alphabet. There is absolutely nothing about the first to suggest the sound A; nothing about the second to suggest the sound B. The whole thing is so incomprehensible; how can he ever hope to master it? An adult brain, introduced to such a conglomeration for the first time, would reel and

stagger; is it any wonder that these childish cheeks get flushed or that the curly head turns at times very feverishly upon the pillow?

The sequence, too, is as baffling as the symbols. There is every reason why *two* should come between *one* and *three;* and that reason is so obvious that the tiniest tot in the class can appreciate it. But why must B come between A and C? There is no natural advance, as in the case of the numerals. The letter B is not a little more than the letter A, nor a little less than the letter C. Except through the operation of the law of association, which only weaves its spell with the passing of the years, there is nothing about A to suggest B, and nothing about B to suggest C. The combination is a rope of sand. Robert Moffat only realized the insuperable character of this difficulty when he attempted to teach the natives of Bechuanaland the English alphabet. Each of his dusky pupils brought to the task an observation that had been trained in the wilds, a brain that had been developed by the years, and an intelligence that had been matured by experience. They were not babies. Yet the alphabet proved too much for them. Why should A be A? and why should B be B? and why should the one follow the other? Mr. Moffat was on the point of abandoning his educational enterprise as hopeless, when one thick-lipped and woolly-headed genius suggested that he should teach them to sing it! At first blush the notion seemed preposterous. There are some

things which, like Magna Charta and minute-books, cannot be set to music. Robert Moffat, however, was a Scotsman. The tune most familiar to his childhood came singing itself over and over in his brain; by the most freakish and fantastic conjunction of ideas it associated itself with the problem that was baffling him; and, before that day's sun had set, he had his Bechuana pupils roaring the alphabet to the tune of *Auld Lang Syne!*

So A B C
D E F G
H I J K L M
N O P Q
R S T U
V W X Y Z.

The rhyme and metre fitted perfectly. The natives were so delighted that they strolled about the village shouting the new song at the tops of their voices; and Mr. Moffat declares that daylight was stealing through his bedroom window before the weird unearthly yells at last subsided. I have often wondered whether, in a more civilized environment, any attempt has been made to impress the letters upon the mind in the same way.

II

The symbolism of the alphabet rises to a sudden grandeur, however, when it is enlisted in the service of revelation. Long, long ago a startled shepherd

was ordered to visit the court of the mightiest of earthly potentates, and to address him on matters of state in the name of the Most High. *'And the Lord said unto Moses, Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, and I will send thee also unto the children of Israel. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I am come unto them and shall say, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say What is His name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you!'*

'I am——!'

'I am—what?'

For centuries and centuries that question stood unanswered; that sentence remained incomplete. It was a magnificent fragment. It stood like a monument that the sculptor had never lived to finish; like a poem that the poet, dying with his music in him, had left with its closing stanzas unsung. But the sculptor of *that* fragment was not dead; the singer of *that* song had not perished. For, behold, He liveth for evermore! And, in the fullness of itme, He reappeared and filled in the gap that had so long stood blank.

'I am——!'

'I am—what?'

'I am—*the Bread of Life!*' 'I am—*the Light of the World!*' 'I am—*the Door!*' 'I am—*the True Vine!*' 'I am—*the Good Shepherd!*' 'I am—*the*

Way, the Truth, and the Life!' 'I am—*the Resurrection and the Life!'*

And when I come to the end of the Bible, to the last book of all, I find the series supplemented and completed.

'I am—*Alpha and Omega!'* 'I am—*A and Z!'* 'I am—*the Alphabet!'* The symbolism of which I have spoken can rise to no greater height than that. What, I wonder, can such symbolism symbolize? I take these birthday blocks that came to our house to-day and strew the letters on my study floor. So far as any spiritual significance is concerned, they seem as dead as the dry bones in Ezekiel's Valley. And yet—*'I am the Alphabet!'* 'Come,' I cry, with the prophet of the captivity, 'come from the *Four Winds,* O Breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live!' And the prayer has scarcely escaped my lips when lo, all the letters of the alphabet shine with a wondrous lustre and glow with a profound significance.

III

For see, the *North* Wind breathes upon these letters on the floor, and I see at once that they are symbols of the *'Inexhaustibility of Jesus!' 'I am Alpha and Omega!' 'I am the Alphabet!'* I have sometimes stood in one of our great public libraries. I have surveyed with astonishment the serried ranks of English literature. I have looked up, and, in tier above tier, gallery above gallery, shelf

above shelf, the books climbed to the very roof, while, looking before me and behind me, they stretched as far as I could see. The catalogue containing the bare names of the books ran into several volumes. And yet the whole of this literature consists of these twenty-six letters on the floor arranged and rearranged in kaleidoscopic variety of juxtaposition. Which, I ask myself, is the greater—the literature or the alphabet? And I see at once that the alphabet is the greater because it is so inexhaustible. Literature is in its infancy. We shall produce greater poets than Shakespeare, greater novelists than Dickens, greater philosophers, historians and humorists than any who have yet written. But they will draw upon the alphabet for every letter of every syllable of every word that they write. They may multiply our literature a million-million-fold; yet the alphabet will be as far from exhaustion when the last page is finished as it was before the first writer seized a pen.

'I am—the Alphabet!' He says. He means that He cannot be exhausted.

> For the love of God is broader
> Than the measure of Man's mind;
> And the heart of the Eternal
> Is most wonderfully kind.

The ages may draw upon His grace; the men of every nation and kindred and people and tongue—a multitude that no statistician can number—may

kneel in contrition at His feet; His love is as great as His power and knows neither measure nor end. He is inexhaustible.

IV

And when the *South* Wind breathes upon these letters on the floor, I see at once that they are symbols of the *Indispensability of Jesus.* Literature, with all its hoarded wealth, is as inaccessible as the diamonds of the moon until I have mastered the alphabet. The alphabet is the golden key that unlocks to me all its treasures of knowledge, poetry and romance.

'I am—the Alphabet!' He says; and He says it three separate times. For the words occur thrice in the Apocalypse. In the *first* case they refer to the unfolding of the divine revelation; in the *second* they refer to the interpretation of historic experience; and in the *third* they refer to the unveiled drama of the future. As the disciples discovered on the road to Emmaus, I cannot understand my Bible unless I take Him as being the key to it all; I cannot understand the processes of historical development until I have given Him the central place; I cannot anticipate with equanimity the unfoldings of the days to come until I have seen the keys of the eternities swinging at His girdle.

The alphabet is, essentially, an individual affair. In order to read a single sentence, I must learn it *for myself.* My father's intimacy with the alphabet

does not help me to enjoy the volumes on my shelves. The alphabet is indispensable *to me;* and so is He! There is something very pathetic and very instructive about the story that Legh Richmond tells of *The Young Cottager.* 'The rays of the morning star,' Mr. Richmond says, 'were not so beautiful in my sight as the spiritual lustre of this young Christian's character.' She was very ill when he visited her for the last time. 'There was animation in her look—there was more—something like a foretaste of heaven seemed to be felt, and gave an inexpressible character of spiritual beauty even in death.'

'Where is your hope, my child?' Mr. Richmond asked, in the course of that last conversation.

'Lifting up her finger,' he says, 'she pointed to heaven, and then directed the same finger downward to her own heart, saying successively as she did so, *"Christ there!"* and *"Christ here!"* These words, accompanied by the action, spoke her meaning more solemnly than can easily be conceived.'

In life and in death He is our one indispensability. In relation to this world, and in relation to the world that is to come, He stands to the soul as the alphabet stands in relation to literature.

V

And when the *East* Wind breathes upon these letters on the floor, I see at once that they are symbols of the *Invincibility of Jesus. 'I am—A and Z!'* He is at the beginning, that is to say,

and He goes right through to the end. There is nothing in the alphabet before A; there is nothing after Z. However far back your evolutionary interpretation of the universe may place the beginning of things, you will find Him there. However remote your interpretation of prophecy may make the end of things, you will find Him there. He goes right through. The story of the ages—past, present and future—may be told in a sentence: 'Christ first, Christ last, and nought between but Christ.' Having begun, He completes. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. He sets His face like a flint. Nothing daunts, deters, or dismays Him. 'I am confident,' Paul says, 'of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the end.' He never halts at H or L or P or X; he goes right through to Z. He never gives up.

VI

But the greatest comfort of all comes to me on the Wings of the *West* Wind. For, when the West Wind breathes upon these letters on the floor, I see at once that they are symbols of the *Adaptability of Jesus.* The lover takes these twenty-six letters and makes them the vehicle for the expression of his passion; the poet transforms them into a song that shall be sung for centuries; the judge turns them into a sentence of death. In the hands of each they mold themselves to his necessity. The alphabet is the most fluid, the most accommodating,

the most plastic, the most adaptable contrivance on the planet. Just because, in common with every man breathing, I possess a distinctive individuality, I sometimes feel as no man ever felt before, and I express myself in language such as no man ever used. And the beauty of the alphabet is that it adapts itself to my individual need. And that is precisely the beauty of Jesus. *'I am—the Alphabet!'* I may not have sinned more than others; but I have sinned differently. The experiences of others never sound convincing; they do not quite reflect my case. But, like the alphabet, He adapts Himself to *every* case. He is the very Saviour I need.

VI

PIECRUST

I

'WHAT do you say to a day or two together at the Nuggets?' asked John Broadbanks one summer's evening. I was just returning from a long round of visitation among the outlying farms, and, driving into Mosgiel in the dusk, met him on his way home to Silverstream. We reined up for a moment to exchange greetings, and he made the suggestion I have just recorded. The prospect was certainly very alluring. We had neither of us been away for some time. There is no wilder or more romantic bit of scenery on the New Zealand coast; and a visit to the stately old lighthouse, perched on its rugged and precipitous cliffs, was always a delightful and bracing experience.

'We will drive down,' he continued, seeing by my hesitation that any resistance on my part would be extremely feeble. 'Sidwell of Balclutha has often urged us to spend a night at his manse. We will break our journey there. We can slip our guns into the spring-cart, and the driving and the shooting will be half the fun of the frolic. And we may have time to explore the coast a bit. I should like to see the reef on which the *Queen of the Amazons*

was wrecked last week, and, if we are lucky enough to strike a low tide, we may be able to scramble on board. Are you on?'

He found me very pliable, as, on such occasions, he usually did; and we spent a memorable week together. On the Sunday, there being no service at the Nuggets, we walked along the wet sands to Port Molyneux, and joined a little group of settlers who met for worship in the schoolhouse. We rested on the beach during the afternoon, and, in the evening, set out to walk to the lighthouse. It was a glorious moonlight night; we could see the rabbits scurrying across the road half a mile ahead. When we reached the crest of that bold promontory on the extremity of which the lighthouse stands, we found ourselves surveying a new stretch of coast. The cliffs at our feet were almost perpendicular, and, far below us, the wild waves breaking madly over her, lay all that was left of the *Queen of the Amazons*. We spread out a coat on the edge of the cliff, and sat for some time in silent contemplation of this weird and romantic spectacle.

'Well,' I said at last, 'and how did you enjoy the service this morning?'

The moon was shining full upon his face, and I could see at a glance that he was reluctant to reply.

'I was afraid you would ask me that,' he said at length. 'Well, frankly, I was disappointed. It may have been because I was in a holiday mood, or perhaps our long walk on such a lovely morning

had unfitted me for thinking on the sadder side of things; but, however that may be, I found the service depressing. It checked the gaiety of my spirit and deadened the exhilaration which I took to it. I went in singing; I came out sighing. I felt somehow, that the preaching was *mostly piecrust.* Obviously, the fellow was not well, and he allowed his dyspepsia to darken his doctrine. Indigestion was never intended to be an infectious disease; but he made it so by sending us all away suffering from the after-effects of his unwholesome breakfast. I usually jot down a preacher's heads or divisions, but I didn't trouble to make a note of his. It was, firstly, *piecrust;* and, secondly, *piecrust;* and, thirdly, *piecrust;* and *piecrust* all the way through!'

John was not usually a caustic critic. He saw the best in most of us and magnified it. His outburst that night on the cliff was therefore the more startling and the more memorable. I have quite forgotten what the preacher said at Port Molyneux in the morning; but, as long as I live, I shall remember what John said as we sat in the silvery moonlight that summer's evening, looking down at the great ship being torn to pieces by the waves on the cruel reef just below.

II

'Why, bless me,' I heard a man exclaim yesterday in the course of an animated discussion at the street corner, 'if things go on like this, I shan't

have a soul to call my own!' As though any man had! No man living has a soul to call his own, or a stomach to call his own. The preacher at Port Molyneux assumed, as he sat at breakfast, that his digestive organs were his own property, and poor John Broadbanks and I, as well as all the other members of the school-house congregation, were penalized in consequence. Carlyle used to argue, more or less seriously, that the whole course of human history has been repeatedly deflected by blunders of this kind. The world has never known a more decisive battle than the battle of Waterloo; but why did the Duke of Wellington win it? All authorities agree that Napoleon was the greater general. Lord Roberts declares that the schemes of Napoleon were more comprehensive, his genius more dazzling, and his imagination more vivid than Wellington's. Yet on that fateful day that decided the destinies of Europe, Napoleon descended to absolute mediocrity while Wellington rose to surpassing brilliance. The Emperor was never so agitated; the Duke was never so calm. Napoleon, with all the chances in his favor, perpetrated blunder after blunder; the Duke seemed omniscient and infallible. Why? Carlyle used to say that Napoleon threw his brain out of action by eating a hearty breakfast of fried potatoes. In one respect, at any rate, Carlyle knew what he was talking about. 'As a student,' he says, 'I discovered that I was the owner of a diabolical arrangement called a stomach;

and I have never been free from the knowledge from that hour to this; and I suppose I never shall until I am laid away in my grave.' Warned, however, by the melancholy fate which he believed Napoleon to have suffered, he guarded against any overflow of his distress. His readers rarely suffer from the after-effects of his indiscreet breakfasts. We read *Sartor Resartus, Heroes and Hero-worship,* and *Past and Present,* and never once think of piecrust or of fried potatoes.

It is true, I dare say, that all the people in the school-house were not affected as John Broadbanks was. Indeed, I heard next day of one lady who thought the sermon very affecting. It nearly made her cry, she said; and she felt sure that the preacher was not long for this world. I would not on any consideration deprive this excellent creature of her lachrymal felicity; but if her well-meant encomiums reached the preacher's ears, I hope he did not take them too seriously. Lots of people are fond of piecrust, but it does not follow that it is good for them. The sort of sermon that would have stimulated the faith of John Broadbanks might not have brought tears to the eyes of the lady who was moved to such a compassionate ecstasy, but it might have been better for her in the long run. John Broadbanks found the piecrust sermon depressing; yet, to a certain type of mind, few things are more attractive than sadness. We all remember Macaulay's observations on the inordinate popularity

of Byron. 'It is,' he says, 'without a parallel in history. To people who are unacquainted with real calamity, nothing is so dainty and sweet as lovely melancholy.' And he goes on to apply this to the pessimism of Byron. 'People bought pictures of him; they treasured up the smallest relics of him; they learned his poems by heart; they did their best to write like him and to look like him. Many of them practised in the glass in the hope of catching the curl of the upper lip and the scowl of the brow which appear in his portraits. The number of hopeful undergraduates and medical students who became things of dark imaginings, on whom the freshness of the heart ceased to fall like dew, and to whom the relief of tears was denied, passes all calculation.' Clearly, this is the lady with the tears—indefinitely multiplied.

Now, by way of contrast, turn for a moment from Byron to Browning. Professor Phelps of Yale says that Browning was too healthy to be popular. He was robust and vigorous, and therefore optimistic. But he is slowly winning his way. His star waxes as Byron's wanes. People find sooner or later that they cannot live for ever on piecrust. Mr. Chesterton says that the bravest thing about Robert Louis Stevenson is that he never allowed his manuscripts to smell of his medicines. The tortures that racked his frame never passed down his pen to the paper spread out before him. You read his sprightly and stirring romances; you live for the

time being among pirates and smugglers and corsairs; you catch the breath of the hills and the tang of the sea; and it never occurs to you that you are the guest of a man who is terribly ill. You hear him laugh; you never hear him cough. You do not see his sunken eyes, his hectic cheek, his spectral form supported by a pile of pillows. You reflect with astonishment when you lay aside the book that the story was written by a creature so pitifully frail that, on all the earth's broad surface, he could only find one outlandish spot—a lonely hilltop in the Pacific—in which he could contrive to breathe. By this time we may hope that our preacher at Port Molyneux has read the *Life of Stevenson.* And, as he did so, he must have resolved that, however excruciating his dyspepsia, his congregation, at least, shall never be infected by it.

I regret now that I did not ask the preacher's name. If only I knew his address, I should find pleasure in posting him a copy of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* For the autocrat knew something about piecrust. The pie at the boarding-house looked one day particularly attractive, and things happened in consequence. 'I took more of it than was good for me,' says the Autocrat, 'and had an indigestion in consequence. While I was suffering from it, I wrote some sadly desponding poems, and a theological essay which took a very melancholy view of creation. When I got better, I labelled them all *Piecrust,* and laid them by as scare-

crows and solemn warnings. I have a number of books on my shelves that I should like to label with some such title; but, as they have great names on their title-pages—Doctors of Divinity, some of them —it wouldn't do!' I should have been tempted to mark this passage before posting the book to Port Molyneux.

III

But the really extraordinary thing about piecrust is that the quality with which it is most frequently taunted is its one redeeming feature, the feature that makes it sublime. Promises, they say, are like piecrust, *made to be broken.* Why, the most beautiful and sacred things in life are made to be broken! Upon all ordinary things, breakage comes as the climax of disaster; upon a select few, breakage comes as the climax of destiny. The fountain-pen that I hold in my hand—the pen with which, without so much as a change of nib, all my books have been written—will lie broken before me one of these days. It was made; it will be broken; but it was not made to be broken. The enjoyment ends with the breakage. But with those other things, the things of the pie-crust class, the enjoyment begins with the breakage. When I was a small boy, I indulged in bird-nesting. And I never looked upon a cluster of delicately-tinted, prettily-speckled eggs without feeling that each egg was the most consummate piece of workmanship that I had ever seen.

Its shape, its color and its pattern were alike perfect. Indeed, I silenced my conscience as I bore the nest home by amplifying this very argument. 'If I leave the nest in the tree,' I said to myself, 'these pretty things will all be broken! When the birds are hatched, the eggs will be smashed! They are far too pretty for that! I will take them home and keep them. I am really saving them by stealing them!' I know now that I was wrong. My argument was made up of casuistry and special pleading. In reality I destroyed the eggs by preserving them. They were made to be broken, and I cheated destiny by preventing the breakage. I have travelled a good many miles since then; but, every step of the way, I have learned, in some new form, the same great lesson. And when, with reverent footsteps, I have climbed the loftiest summits of all, the truth that I first discovered in the English hedgerows has become most radiantly clear. The two greatest events in the history of this planet are the Incarnation and the Crucifixion.

It is *Christmas-time;* and we think with wonder and awe of the mystery of that holy body's making!

It is *Easter-time;* and we think with wonder and awe of the mystery of that holy body's breaking!

It is *Communion-time!* 'This is My body which is broken for you,' He said.

And in the making of that body and the breaking of that body—the body that was made to be broken—a lost world has found salvation.

VII

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

It was a cruel winter's night; an icy wind was howling across the Plain; a glorious fire was blazing in the dining-room grate; and, happily, I had no engagements. To add to our felicity, the San Francisco mail had arrived that morning, bringing our monthly budget of news from home. The letters had, of course, been devoured upon delivery, but the papers and magazines had been laid aside for evening consumption. We had just opened the packages and arranged the journals in order of publication when there came a ring at the front-door bell. We glanced at each other meaningly and at the papers regretfully. All kinds of visions presented themselves; visions of a garrulous visitor who, with business over, would not go; visions of a long drive across the Plain in the biting wind; visions of everything but an evening with each other, a roaring fire and the English mail. As though to rebuke our inhospitable and ungracious thoughts, however, it was only Elsie Hammond. Elsie often dropped in of an evening; she usually brought her fancy-work; and, in her presence, we were perfectly at our ease. Every manse has one or two such visitors. We read, worked, or chatted when Elsie

came just as we should have done if she had not dropped in.

'Why, Elsie,' I exclaimed, as soon as, divested of her hat and cloak, she entered the dining-room and took her usual chair, 'whatever brings you out on a wild night like this?'

'Well,' she replied, 'I wanted to see you about the Young People's Missionary Union. You remember that they made me Secretary last month, and we are arranging for the annual meeting. We have invited Mr. Harriford Johnson, of the North Africa Evangelization Society, to give an address; and I received his reply this morning. He will be coming out from town by the five-twenty train; and I wondered if you could let him come to the manse to tea, and, if needs be, stay the night.'

I put Elsie at her ease by telling her that she might leave the matter of Mr. Johnson's reception and entertainment entirely in my hands; and then, resuming the pile of papers, we had a royal evening with the English news.

The day of the missionary meeting arrived; and, as the clock struck five, I set out for the station. Quite a number of people were moving in the same direction, among them the Rev. J. M. McKerrow, my Presbyterian neighbor. We walked towards the station together. On the platform, however, he recognized a lady friend from a distance; he moved away to speak to her; and, in the bustle of the train's arrival, we saw each other no more.

I had never met Mr. Johnson, nor had any description of his personal appearance been given me. For some reason, I had pictured to myself a tall, cadaverous man in a severe garb, bearing upon him the signs of the ravages wrought by a variety of tropical diseases; and, contrary to one's usual experience, a gentleman roughly according with this prognostication stepped from the train and began to look aimlessly about him.

'Mr. Johnson?' I inquired, approaching him.

'Ah!' he replied, 'and you're from the manse!'

I admitted the impeachment, and we set off together for home. On the way we chatted about the weather, the place, the crops, the people, the church, the services, and things in general. He was a vivacious conversationalist, and exhibited a remarkably alert and hungry mind. He wanted to know all about everything; and when we discussed my own work, its difficulties, and its encouragements, he showed a genuine interest and a delightful sympathy. We had invited several of the leading missionary spirits of the congregation to meet him at tea. In order that the conversation at table might be generally enjoyable, I had stored my mind with a fine assortment of questions concerning conditions in Northern Africa which, like a quiver-full of arrows, I intended firing at our guest as opportunity offered. But opportunity did not offer. Mr. Johnson was so interested in the work of the various organizations represented round the table that he

made it impossible for us to inquire about his own. Moreover, our visitor chanced to discover that one of our guests had in his home a little boy who was afflicted with blindness. On eliciting this information, Mr. Johnson lapsed into sudden silence, and looked, I thought, as though he had been hurt. But, after tea, he drew the father of the blind boy aside and explained to him that he himself had but one child, a little girl of ten, and she was similarly afflicted. As he spoke of her, his vivacity vanished, and a great depth of tenderness revealed itself. I wondered, but did not care to ask, if the blindness of his child was part of the price that he had been compelled to pay for residence in tropical Africa. After telling us of his little daughter, and of the comfort that she was to him, Mr. Johnson looked at his watch.

'We have nearly an hour,' he said, 'before meeting time; may I peep into your sanctum? I love to glance over a man's books.'

Rarely have I spent an hour in the study so delightfully. All his enthusiasm awoke again at sight of the shelves. He took down volume after volume, handling each with affectionate reverence, and making each the text of a running comment of a most fascinating character. Amusing anecdotes about the author; an outline of the singular circumstances under which certain of the books were written; illuminating criticisms by eminent authorities; sparkling quotations of out-of-the-way passages—

there seemed to be no end to his fund of lively and original observations.

'But I say,' he suddenly ejaculated, 'that conversation at table was most interesting and valuable. I had no idea that so much excellent work was being done. I have often wondered——'

But at that moment the mistress of the manse intervened.

'Excuse me,' she said, as she opened the study door, 'but Mr. McKerrow and another gentleman wish to see you at once in the drawing-room.'

To the drawing-room I accordingly repaired; and there I found my companion of the afternoon, accompanied by a short, ruddy, thick-set man, who was laughing very heartily.

'This is an extraordinary situation,' my friend began. 'You will have discovered by this time that we jumped to conclusions too hurriedly this afternoon. *This* is Mr. Harriford Johnson, of the North Africa Evangelization Society, who is, I believe, to lecture for you to-night, and I think you must have walked off with Mr. Douglas E. Johnson, M.A., who is to address our teachers this evening on the kindergarten method as applied to Sunday-school work. Mrs. McKerrow and I had invited the superintendent of our Sunday-school and the teachers of the primary classes to meet Mr. Johnson at tea at the manse, and we got into a beautiful tangle. It was like playing a game of cross questions and crooked answers. The young people were asking

Mr. Johnson's advice on technical matters connected with their classes; and Mr. Johnson was modestly disclaiming all knowledge of the subject, and was telling us of his experiences in Central Africa. We were all beginning to feel that the world had suddenly turned topsy-turvy, when Mr. Johnson suddenly asked how long ago the Young People's Missionary Union was established, and seemed surprised that a Miss Elsie Hammond was not present. Then the truth broke upon us, and we have all been laughing ever since.'

I cordially welcomed Mr. Johnson, and then we all three went through to the dining-room, in which, by this time, the whole of our party was assembled. Mr. Johnson was holding the company spell-bound. I briefly introduced our two visitors, and explained the position. The announcement was received with bursts of merriment, although our tea-table guest was covered with confusion and full of apologies. However, he quickly entered into the humor of the situation, and, after promising to return to lunch with the African Mr. Johnson next day, he went off with Mr. McKerrow laughing heartily.

Both meetings were a great success. The comedy of errors may have had something to do with it. In comparing notes next morning, both speakers declared that they felt very much at home with their audiences. The joke had quickly spread, and created an atmosphere of sympathy and familiarity. Henry Drummond used to say that he could never

get on with people until he had laughed with them. Both meetings opened that evening with a bond already established between speaker and audience; and that stands for a good deal.

We had a very happy time, too, at lunch next morning. Our visitors were both pleased that the mistake had been made.

'It's very nice,' said Mr. Harriford Johnson, 'to have got into touch with two ministers and two congregations instead of one. I am thankful to have been able to say a word for Africa to the young people with whom I had tea at Mr. McKerrow's.'

'And for my part,' added Mr. Douglas Johnson, 'I am thoroughly ashamed of myself. The conversation at the tea-table last evening was a perfect revelation to me. I have often heard about foreign missions, and I suppose I ought to have interested myself in them. But one has his own line of things, and is apt to get into grooves. I had no idea until yesterday that the movement was so orderly and systematic nor that the operations were so extensive. It was like being taken into the confidence of a military commander, and shown his strategy. I go back feeling that my mind has been fitted with a new set of windows, and I am able to look out upon the world in a way that was impossible before. I am delighted, too, to have met my namesake, Mr. Harriford Johnson. He has given me'—taking a pamphlet from his pocket—'a copy of the last annual report of the North Africa Evangelization Society,

and I shall always think more kindly of Africa because of this singular experience at Mosgiel.'

It was years before I heard of either of our visitors again. Mr. Harriford Johnson, it is true, posted me each year a copy of the report of his work. In 1899, however, he enclosed the pamphlet in a note saying that he had found some of the hints that he had picked up in his conversation with Mr. McKerrow's kindergarten teachers very useful to his native school. 'There is something in the idea,' he wrote, 'that appeals to the African mind; and I am sending to London for some literature on the subject with a view to applying the system more extensively. The mistakes that we all made that evening at the Mosgiel railway station have proved, to me, very profitable ones.'

I never heard directly from Mr. Douglas Johnson. But, about five years afterwards, I noticed in an Auckland paper the announcement of the death of his little blind girl; and, a year or two later, I saw in the annual report of Mr. Harriford Johnson's Mission the acknowledgement of a handsome donation from D.E.J., *'in loving memory of one who, though spending all her days in darkness, now sees, and desires that Africa shall have the Light of Life.'*

Of all the things that are made in a world like this, mistakes are by no means the worst.

Date Due

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

SFTS Library
2 Kensington Road
San Anselmo, CA 94960
(415) 451-2845

All items are subject to recall

re 3481 12/11/3
GTU Library
3 2400 00599 3583
WITHDRAWN
SAN FRANCISCO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Alcove N
Case 1
Shelf e